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The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin

Competition and Competitivness

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The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin

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The *Bulletin* invites materials appropriate to the Society's Purposes: position papers, applied and/or data-based research, and other articles on announced themes or other topics of interest to educators; letters to the editor; viewpoints; book reviews; annotated bibliographies; poetry; and graphic arts.

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Members are encouraged to submit manuscripts for consideration by the *Bulletin* Editorial Board. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* accepts Action Research, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Annotated Bibliographies, Program Descriptions, Position Papers, Book Reviews, Viewpoints, Graphic Arts, Letters to the Editor, and Poetry for **print** issues (spring, fall) and **online** issues (summer, winter). Manuscripts should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise, and appropriate for *Bulletin* readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable, and free from gender, political, patriotic, or religious bias. For more detailed information, please refer to the Submission Guidelines on page 68 and the Submission Grid on page 69. Listed below are the suggested themes of upcoming issues.

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From the Editor

As nations face tight times in an increasingly global economy, leaders naturally look for ways to increase competitiveness by preparing young people to be more productive, successful citizens in a changing world. Indeed, such a focus on competitiveness has been the stimulus for educational reform movements in many countries, and thoughtful educators must accordingly consider the proper role of competition and competitiveness in education.

Unfortunately, in pursuing economic competitiveness, educational policy makers from the national to the classroom level may embrace models of competition that are counterproductive. Those who push school reform often come from venues—such as business and politics—where competition rejects the weak and rewards the strong. In athletics, counting the number of goals scored seems a reasonable quantification of achievement to determine the "winners" and "losers." But business and athletic models of competition that suggest quantification and comparison in education—via test scores, class grades, and GPAs—may undermine educators' goals. Simply put, society cannot afford to have *winners* and *losers* in the educational arena. If the purpose of education is to develop each individual to the maximum of his or her capacity, then allowing some to thrive and some to fall by the wayside is not acceptable—and relying on quantification and comparison to sort, to label, or to measure one student, one class, or one school against another is truly misguided.

Of course, some will argue that competition engenders motivation—but *motivation for whom* and *motivation to do what?* Competition in terms of scores *may* motivate those who are able to succeed at the *game* of school, but it can be demoralizing and discouraging for those who struggle to hit the mark. How motivational is it for educators, for example, to be on the faculty of a "failing" school in the United States based on test scores that are but a snapshot of the complex endeavor of educating young people? Furthermore, if reporting of scores and labeling of children and schools on the basis of these scores *does* create an incentive to improve, does such motivation encourage an emphasis on deeper learning for the students—or simply on strategies to increase the all-important scores? At what point does competition move from being a motivational device to being an end in itself? If the purpose of education is to master concepts and skills (to learn), there is no need to compete with others to accomplish that goal. One individual's mastery does not threaten another's mastery; both can "win" in this endeavor, and, in fact, society and nations as a whole will benefit as more individuals win.

The articles in this issue take on some of the complexities of competition and competitiveness in education: the impact of high-stakes testing on school policy and practice, as well as on specific student subgroups; the use of a competition as an incentive to improve recognition of diversity; the ways that various nations help their young people to become multilingual in order to increase their competitiveness in a world market. These theme-focused articles are complemented by articles that emphasize a variety of educational topics, ranging from reports on a DKG-supported project, reminders about making dynamic presentations, and descriptions of innovative programs…to research pieces about school leadership and the impact of earlier experiences on teachers with alternative certifications. No competition here: savor the unique excellence of each article!

Judith R. Merz, Ed.D.
Editor

High-Stakes Assessments and English Language Learners

By Andrea Honigsfeld and Vicky Giouroukakis

In this position paper, the authors argue that high-stakes, standardized assessments place an enormous challenge both on learners for whom English is a Second Language and their teachers. Yet, based on a thorough review of the literature and their own recent research on standardized test preparation practices for English Language Learners, they also claim that employing culturally and linguistically responsive instructional strategies may lessen the stress associated with test-driven instruction and improve student learning outcomes as well.

Both the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (2002) and the impending implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) across the United States place high expectations on all learners. The CCSS were developed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers to provide clear expectations for all students to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills for college and career readiness (Common Core State Standards Initiative). Currently, the standards have been formally adopted by 44 states. The challenge of meeting the new standards is especially severe for English language learners (ELLs) for a number of compelling reasons: (a) special emphasis is placed on informational texts across all content areas, (b) college and workplace readiness are emphasized, and (c) no special accommodations are made for ELLs.

Abedi and Dietel (2004) claimed that at least four critical issues need to be considered when ELLs' participation in standardized assessments is compared to that of their native-English-speaking counterparts:

1.   Low ELL performance on state assessments and lower rates of improvement across several years have been documented.

2.   Instead of content attainment only, when it comes to ELLs' performance on state assessments, both content-based achievement and language ability are measured.

3.   The ELL population as a subgroup is highly transient; many high-performing ELLs leave the group.

4.   Numerous nonschool-related factors also impact on the group's performance.

Further, as a result of her extensive research on current assessment practices, Menken (2006) suggested that high-stakes testing impacts not only work with ELLs but also educational practice in general, noting that "standardized tests become *de facto* language policy when attached to high-stakes consequences, shaping what content schools teach, how it is taught, by whom it is taught, and in what language(s) it is taught" (p. 537). In addition, Valli and Buese (2007) suggested that "high-stakes policy directives promote

an environment in which teachers are asked to relate to their students differently, enact pedagogies that are often at odds with their vision of best practice, and experience high levels of stress" (p. 520).

Because standardized assessments and standards-based instruction are expected to continue to define the educational landscape (Wiliam, 2010), we researched effective approaches to standardized test preparation for ELLs (Giouroukakis & Honigsfeld, 2010). Specifically, we conducted a multicase study to investigate the impact of high-stakes testing on the literacy practices of teachers of high school ELLs in three Long Island, New York, school districts in one of the most racially and socioeconomically segregated regions of the United States. The goal of the study was to explore what kinds of literacy tasks and materials were implemented in order to develop ELLs' literacy skills and prepare them to be successful on the New York State Regents English examinations required for graduation. Our findings indicated that the participating teachers engaged in both (a) instructional activities and materials that directly prepared their students for the state's high-stakes exam (teaching to the test) and (b) culturally and linguistically responsive practices. Based on these findings, we suggest that educators working with ELLs in all content areas and at all grade levels utilize culturally and linguistically responsive techniques in *all* their instruction, including when they engage their ELLs in test-preparation activities.

Key Concepts Defined

Cultural responsiveness and linguistic responsiveness have been previously defined by numerous researchers, the former receiving decades of support in the professional literature, and the latter becoming more widely researched in recent years. Culturally responsive teaching, according to Gay (2000), uses "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them. …. It is culturally *validating and affirming*" (p. 29) and thus invites students to become more engaged in learning. We concur with Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008), who defined linguistic responsiveness as involving

> three types of pedagogical expertise [teachers should have]: (a) familiarity with the students' linguistic and academic backgrounds, (b) an understanding of the language demands inherent in the learning tasks that students are expected to carry out in class, (c) and skills for using appropriate scaffolding. (p. 367)

It is important to note that both Gay's and Lucas et al.'s definitions include the prerequisite of teachers' understanding and affirmation of students' cultural and linguistic identities, which are "shaped by self-perceptions, desires, hopes, and expectations, as well as salient aspects of the social context, such as sociopolitical ideologies, histories, and structures that are often beyond the control of an individual" (Lee & Anderson, 2009, p.

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181). Such identities are also impacted by "the various ideologies, power structures, and historical legacies associated with different forms of language use, cultures, and situations" (Lee & Anderson, p. 181).

Our Position
The NCLB Act (2002) requires ELLs to be included in high stakes tests (Irby et al., 2010; Coltrane, 2002). When English learners are included in state assessments, their academic performance is measured by tests that were designed for English-speaking students and, as such, may be culturally and linguistically inappropriate for ELLs. Test items may contain concepts or ideas that may be unfamiliar to ELLs who come from diverse cultures and who have not lived in the United States for a long time (Coltrane, 2002). For example, a prompt that asks students to write a persuasive essay about whether or not the United States should spend money on alternative energy sources will pose a challenge for ELLs who need to be familiar with a number of cultural references, such as the history of energy use in the United States, what alternative sources of energy exist, the views on this topic of the country's major opposing political parties, and the risks and benefits of spending resources on alternative energy versus oil drilling.

> " *The demographics of U.S. schools continue to change and include increasing numbers of ELLs who have unique cultural and linguistic needs. Nevertheless, educators spend an increasing amount of instructional time on standardized test preparation, and policy makers continue to neglect what research ... indicates about best instructional and assessment practices for ELLs.* "

Teaching to the test as an all-too-common instructional approach may be especially damaging to ELLs whose cultural and linguistic needs may be overlooked as they may be exposed to "less meaningful instruction and a lack of focus on the sociocultural context in which students are schooled" (Collier & Thomas, 2010, para. 5). "[T]he vast majority of high-stakes tests are written and administered only in English, often leaving ELLs at a disadvantage and raising questions as to how the test results should be interpreted" (Coltrane, 2002, para. 4). Thus, based on our own as well as others' research (Gay, 2000, 2002; Giouroukakis & Honigsfeld, 2010; Menken, 2006; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Valli & Buese, 2007), we believe that when teachers implement culturally and linguistically responsive instructional practices, they pay special attention to the students' individual needs as opposed to teaching merely the mandated curriculum or to preparing simply for typical test items that appear on standardized assessments.

Implications for Instruction
In response to the cultural and linguistic challenges that high-stakes tests pose for ELLs, we found in our professional experiences as teacher educators and staff developers and in our research that educators who successfully work with ELLs carefully craft their lessons

to incorporate a variety of culturally and linguistically responsive strategies that (a) are closely aligned to the target curriculum; (b) consider the specific academic, linguistic, and social-emotional needs of diverse students; and (c) systematically and meaningfully support learning for ELLs. We provide teachers of ELLs with the following advice regarding culturally and linguistically responsive practices for ELLs based on our most recent research (Giouroukakis & Hongisfeld, 2010; Honigsfeld & Giouroukakis, 2011).

Culturally Responsive Practices

1. Incorporate content topics and instructional materials and resources that are relevant to students' diverse home cultures.

2. Relate to and validate ELLs' out-of-school, lived experiences by addressing local issues and current events embedded in the taught curriculum.

3. Use a variety of motivational techniques that allow students to engage with the curriculum in authentic and personally meaningful ways.

4. Embrace your ELLs' "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992) and allow them to show their expertise (rather than deficiencies) in the classroom.

5. Expand your ongoing, formative assessments to include authentic, performance-based, project-based, or task-based assessment tools. Rather than relying on outcomes from one measure, give students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their content and linguistic knowledge.

Linguistically Responsive Practices

1. Use *chunking* by breaking down challenging academic tasks to make learning manageable. Offer step-by-step linguistic modeling through think-alouds, read-alouds, and write-alouds.

2. Provide adequate wait time for students to process and respond to questions and prompts.

3. Create ample opportunities for oral rehearsal of new skills through small-group interactions and other cooperative group structures.

4. Modify reading assignments, worksheets, and both in-class and homework assignments by simplifying the linguistic complexity.

5. Use students' native language for clarification and to teach dictionary skills.

6. Introduce key testing vocabulary and sentence structures unique to standardized tests.

Conclusion

The demographics of U.S. schools continue to change and include increasing numbers of ELLs who have unique cultural and linguistic needs. Nevertheless, educators spend an increasing amount of instructional time on standardized test preparation, and policy makers continue to neglect what research (Abedi & Dietel, 2004; Collier & Thomas, 2010; Gay, 2000, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995) indicates about best instructional and assessment practices for ELLs. Instead, we believe that teachers and administrators must advocate culturally and linguistically responsive practices that will recognize, value, and affirm ELLs' diverse backgrounds and unique academic needs. By utilizing curriculum and instructional practices that include students' different backgrounds, educators create opportunities for advancing ELLs' achievement on tests and ensuring academic success for *all* learners.

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Back to High School: A Teacher Educator's Hands-On Encounter with the Pressures of High-Stakes Testing

By Audrey T. Edwards and Judith J. Pula

*A*n interview relates the story of one professor's sabbatical in the public schools. The interviewee reports reliving the teacher's role while seeing first-hand the effects of No Child Left Behind legislation, which holds every U.S. school accountable for the progress of all of its students. One local school, to make the mandated Adequate Yearly Progress, had to raise its percentage of students passing a required reading test, so the interviewee coached borderline students. After this glimpse into that school's operation, she concludes that, for a teacher educator, a semester at a public school is a valuable learning experience, particularly for understanding the way high-stakes testing affects the educational process.

Introduction

When living in Maryland, the authors became teaching colleagues and writing partners at a state university. After Dr. Edwards relocated to Illinois, they continued their partnership, writing a book and several articles together. For this article, Dr. Pula interviewed her colleague to investigate the idea of a professor's taking a sabbatical in the public schools. The authors hope this account will encourage others to take similar leaves and thereby enrich their teaching with fresh knowledge of the public schools and the pressures educators face in meeting No Child Left Behind mandates.

Pula: What prompted you to apply for a sabbatic leave?
Edwards: My job is to prepare teacher candidates (as much as a professor can) to teach high school. To maximize my effectiveness, I need to keep my sense of what adolescents are like—their abilities, their interests, their needs—and the challenges their teachers face each day. So when I had the opportunity to take a sabbatic leave, I asked to spend it at a local school. As a result, I managed to teach a little and experience a lot. My adventure renewed my admiration for high school teachers and refreshed my sense of their work—particularly as it relates to the demands of high stakes testing.

Specifically, what did you do in the schools?
I decided to offer my services tutoring individual students in reading and writing, two subjects I had taught for several years. The principal of our local high school

accepted, saying I could work with small groups of juniors to prepare them for a state-mandated American College Testing (ACT) reading test. The school had failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading the previous year, so it had to raise the percentage of students who passed this test. Given limited resources, the surest way to raise this figure was to coach those who had failed a practice test by 5 points or less. My task was to teach a month-long test-prep course for these borderline students.

What was good about this assignment?
In some ways my assignment was ideal. I had taught critical reading courses before. Overall, student morale was good at this school. I would be teaching juniors, who were old enough to drop out but had chosen to stay. These well-dressed, mostly middle-class kids were not the worst readers in the school. I would teach small groups (2 to 9 students). I would get textbooks, so my lessons would be largely created for me, and I had no papers to grade.

How did it go?
The school received a grant to pay for two sets of textbooks, but by the time funds were available, faculty had to order the books sight unseen. One was filled with explanations of reading strategies but had no practice materials. The other book was too easy for juniors. I hastily photocopied practice tests from the ACT guide and supplemented them with readings of my own.

Unfortunately, once my students learned that they were enrolled because they had failed an earlier practice test, the class acquired a major stigma. It did not help that the test dealt with reading, something the teenagers regarded as an elementary-school subject. About 20% of my students withdrew from the course during the first week. Another 30% stayed but were not happy: A girl I'll call Erica stared at me, beady-eyed, silent, for the whole 4 weeks. Another student, Mark, said, "This class is making me worse. At first I was doing fine, but now I'm missing all the questions." Others read the selections I gave them but muttered "I don't know" every single time I called on them. However, about half pitched in to help each other learn. And when we discussed topics they could relate to, such as open adoptions and the bystander effect, even the weaker readers contributed good ideas and were pleased that they could shine.

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What did you learn about high-stakes testing?
My initial impression was that No Child Left Behind, with its demands for AYP, was truly driving the members of the school community mad—or at the very least, causing them to become extremely focused on one test. I was not assigned to work with students who had the most severe reading problems, but rather to work with those juniors most likely to boost their ACT scores to passing and thus

increase the school's chance of meeting AYP. Because the class was just 4 weeks long, we did little critical evaluation of ideas—the heart of reading improvement. I did ask students to predict the main idea, identify the author's point of view, and make inferences, but I also spent time coaching students on everything from comparing multiple choice foils, to scanning for names and numbers, to eating a high fat breakfast before the test—and we practiced, practiced, practiced on old ACT reading tests.

Then the school shifted to block scheduling for 2 weeks so that all juniors—not just those in my class—could take timed practice tests in English, reading, math, and science. ("You're not going to give us another test, are you?" my students wailed. "We've been taking tests all day!") To stimulate students' efforts, the school offered a pizza party, complete with live music and prizes, before the test and a movie night afterward.

All of these were creative responses to the pressure for higher test scores, but why so much pressure? This was a well-run, relatively well-funded school with many outstanding teachers and plenty of volunteer help from the community. As far as reaching students who might be marginalized, the school had no English language learners when I was there, and it did an exemplary job of respecting its minority subgroups and integrating students with special needs. What groups were supposedly being left behind? What needed fixing except the AYP measures themselves? A single test score cannot possibly measure a school's effectiveness, yet schools' funding and reputations rest on test results—perhaps because scores are easy for voters to understand. In reality, educators and voters alike should be looking at multiple measures of a school's effectiveness.

> *A single test score cannot possibly measure a school's effectiveness, yet schools' funding and reputations rest on test results—perhaps because scores are easy for voters to understand. In reality, educators and voters alike should be looking at multiple measures of a school's effectiveness.*

The pressure to make AYP did, however, have one highly positive outcome: the hiring of a literacy coach and a math coach for the next year. In these strained economic times, the school board might otherwise have had trouble justifying such a move to the taxpayers. These coaches will work with teachers as well as students throughout the school year. I hope that with expanded resources, the school will be able to offer an ACT test-prep course as a service for any students who want to raise their scores (perhaps with a nudge to those who most need it), thereby removing the *remedial* label. Furthermore, a full-time literacy coach will have time to move beyond the confines of ACT prep to actual improvement of reading. The plan is for this person to collaborate with faculty and to work with them on strategies for improving the reading ability of all students in all content areas.

It will be a challenge to go beyond raising test scores—to make reading intrinsically interesting and to involve students in wrestling with ideas. Such substantial improvements are not an easy sell: students are inundated with passive entertainment, and some are apathetic about school in general. The teachers will have their work cut out for them.

What personal lessons did you gain from the experience?
I certainly learned that teaching high school is wearing! I also had a refresher course in some basic lessons I had learned much earlier. A key point: if I show respect and consideration, I may get some in return. I hope to pass these lessons on to my teacher candidates, not by lecturing about generalities but by example and guided practice.

> " *I came away convinced that all teacher educators should consider spending substantial time in the public schools as a way to relearn what public-school education is all about. These educators will definitely benefit from such a reality check . . .* "

Would you recommend the task to others?
I absolutely would recommend the task to others!

Ultimately, I found the pace of modern schools exhausting but the rewards—getting to know students and learning more about the teachers' work—very worthwhile. I came away convinced that all teacher educators should consider spending substantial time in the public schools as a way to relearn what public-school education is all about. These educators will definitely benefit from such a reality check, one that allows them to reconnect with students and to gain a hands-on understanding of the demands placed upon the school community by the current high-stakes testing environment.

Diversity Awards: Incentives for Enhancing Campus Climate at the Postsecondary Level

By Frances D. Luther, Debbie M. Seeberger, Sean Phelan, and Shannon Simpson

*F*aced with an environment of escalating hate crimes, members on one campus took a proactive step to promote understanding. The authors provide an overview of the considerations and outcomes of a diversity-related initiative to enhance postsecondary campus climate. The initiative involved creating diversity awards for students, staff, faculty, and departments. After stating the problem and defining diversity, the authors discuss considerations for establishing the awards, for creating the nomination forms, and for evaluating the nominations. Recommendations for research on the awards program and a conclusion are included. This discussion may provide a model for promoting diversity and enhancing the campus climate at other educational institutions.

Statement of the Problem

In order for postsecondary institutions to attract and retain students from diverse backgrounds (Macedo, 2008) and to "…achieve higher levels of excellence" (Nevarez-La Torre, Sanford-DeShields, Soundy, Leonard, & Woyshner, 2008, p. 303), the climate on these campuses must be one in which diversity is valued and protected. Unfortunately, hate crimes are prevalent (Vozzella & Merkus, 2010) and have escalated over the past few years against certain populations in the United States (Banks, 2009). As the Southern Poverty Law Center (2010) reported, "One in 10 students says that someone at school has called them a derogatory word related to race, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, or sexual orientation in the past six months" (p. 85). Leaders at postsecondary institutions, therefore, must decide whether or not to be proactive in curtailing such instances on their campuses.

Towson University (TU) administrators took the proactive step of forming a Diversity Coordinating Council (DCC). Membership of the Council consists of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (Chair), the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Vice President for Administration and Finance, the Assistant to the President for Diversity, and the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs for Diversity. The Council is charged with facilitating the establishment and maintenance of an inclusive campus environment.

The DCC is supported by the Diversity Action Committee (DAC), which was enhanced and broadened in 2010 to better implement the mission of the DCC. The expanded DAC included representatives from TU's five academic colleges as well as the university library. Students and representatives of various diversity-related groups on campus were also

invited. Subsequently, the DAC established five work groups to support the mission of the DCC. One work group, the Reflective Process Working Group (RPWG), was given the mandate of creating the TU President's Diversity Awards Program. The following is an overview of the considerations and outcomes of the RPWG's work in establishing this program.

For the purposes of this discussion, *diversity* is used as a broad and encompassing term that includes awareness and appreciation for human differences such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, age, and so forth. The TU Web site indicates that these differences should be viewed as areas of strength, not weaknesses (Towson University, 2011b).

Considerations for Establishing the President's Diversity Awards
The RPWG discussed several considerations for developing the awards. The group determined the nature and scope of the awards, designed nomination forms, secured funding for the awards, developed a timeline of events for the awards process, and promoted the awards.

Determining the Nature and Scope of the Awards
Deciding on the nature and scope of the awards was the first step in their development. In order to fulfill its goal of reaching all the campus community with these awards, the RPWG decided upon four individual awards–one student, one staff, one general faculty, one faculty research–and two departmental awards–one for an academic department and one for an administrative department. Money was attached to each award as an extrinsic incentive. A cash prize of $500 was allotted for each of the individual awards. A cash prize of $1000 was allotted for each of the departmental awards. All winners would also receive a certificate of recognition for their outstanding work in support of TU's diversity mission.

The overall criteria for the awards were as follows:
- Nominees have demonstrated outstanding accomplishments that have increased awareness and understanding of diversity.
- Nominees have demonstrated outstanding efforts to promote the advancement of diversity and inclusiveness.
- Nominees have demonstrated outstanding accomplishments in support of the institutionalization of diversity. (Towson University, 2010, para 3)

Designing the Nomination Forms
The RPWG designed the nomination forms with special considerations for the categories of student, staff, faculty, and department, as well as with a concern for clarity of instructions for submission of the forms. Each form included specifications for each award, such as acceptable types of products (e.g., videos, peer-reviewed journal articles) to be submitted and copyright dates of the products. The forms can be found at the following URLs:

Student Nomination Form: http://wwwnew.towson.edu/main/abouttu/comdiv /documents/StudentNominationform.pdf

Staff Nomination Form: http://wwwnew.towson.edu/main/abouttu/comdiv /documents/StaffNominationform.pdf

Faculty Nomination Form: http://wwwnew.towson.edu/main/abouttu/comdiv /documents/FacultyNominationform.pdf

Departmental   Nomination   Form: http://wwwnew.towson.edu/main/abouttu
/comdiv/documents/DepartmentNominationform.pdf

The Faculty Nomination Form accommodated two types of awards. One was a general award, and the other was specific to research. RPWG members decided that their goal of keeping the nomination process simple would be best met by having one rather than two separate nomination forms for the faculty.

The Departmental Nomination Form included the following statement and criteria:

The department awards seek to identify initiatives that can be translated into best practices. Contributions may be in one of the following initiative areas, but are not limited to these areas:

- Establishment/Maintenance of a welcoming environment for students, faculty and/or staff
- Recruitment of students, faculty and/or staff
- Retention of students, staff and/or faculty
- Curricula & Instruction
- Research Topics
- Practical Experience (e.g., placement of students in settings with diverse populations). (para 3)

By including these criteria, the committee intended that the nominating process would also become a teaching process in which units could reflect not only on things they were currently doing for diversity, but also on areas in which they could include or improve diversity.

Because nominations included submission of materials that might be used in future TU promotions and thus required copyright release, the RPWG implemented a two-prong submission process. The nomination form did not require a nominee's signature and was e-mailed to an address established specifically for the awards. A copyright form, which required a signature to show that the RPWG had legal permission to use the nominee's work for TU promotional purposes, was mailed or faxed to the TU Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity.

> " *To further promote the awards, the RPWG decided that samples of the work submitted by the nominees would be used in video clips and other multimedia formats in the future.* "

Securing Funding

Securing funding for the awards was next in importance. The university president and TU's vice-presidents, who serve as members of the DCC, eagerly agreed to provide funding for the awards. The RPWG's major goal of improving diversity on campus was in alignment with each of the university's vice-presidential and presidential goals (Caret, 2010).

Determining a Timeline of Events

The RPWG identified a schedule that would give participants enough time to hear about the new awards and nominate a candidate for an award, as well as for the RPWG

to evaluate the nominees and determine winners for the awards. Some time constraints were introduced when the Provost recommended that the awards ceremonies be part of an already-established, larger diversity forum, namely the TU's annual Multicultural Conference. Because the date for the conference had previously been announced, the President's Diversity Awards process had to be completed within 4 months to meet the March 3 conference deadline. The winner-notification date was set approximately 1 month ahead of the awards ceremony to allow winners time to clear their schedules to attend. The timeline for the awards process is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1
Timeline for Award Process

Event	Date
Nominations open	November 1, 2010
Nominations close	December 21, 2010
Winners notified	February 9, 2011
Awards presented	March 3, 2011

Promoting the Awards

The RPWG evaluated several methods for introducing the new awards and continuing their promotion. First, the President's Diversity Awards were new to the university, and advertising was needed to make the university community aware of this initiative. Three main pathways were utilized for promoting the awards. The RPWG created a new Web page (Towson University, 2011a) for information on the awards, including access to the award nomination forms. The committee also created links to the new Web page from the *Commitment to Diversity* statement on the TU Web site home page. A social networking site (Towson Diversity Award, ca. 2010) was created that listed the URL for the new President's Diversity Awards Web site, which encouraged people to nominate candidates for the awards. Bookmarks noting the Web links were distributed by TU's Cook Library staff when patrons checked out materials, by departmental assistants into faculty and staff mail boxes, by student leaders at campus student social events, and through plastic display pouches on shuttle buses. Numerous print and online campus news publications published announcements of the new awards and the URL to the

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awards Web site.

To further promote the awards, the RPWG decided that samples of the work submitted by the nominees would be used in video clips and other multimedia formats in the future. Such use of submitted work required that TU obtain permission from those who held the copyrights to the work. TU's legal counsel provided guidance in development and use of permission forms related to the President's Diversity Awards.

The Evaluation Process

To prevent any conflict of interest, the RPWG asked for volunteers from members of the larger DAC group to help evaluate the nomination forms. The selection committee consisted of an uneven number of evaluators to prevent ties in determining winners for the awards.

In order to determine winners in each category, the reviewers used an evaluation form created by the RPWG using the criteria developed for the awards. RPWG members allotted points to these various criteria in order to allow reviewers to determine their top three nominees after an initial evaluation of all the nominee forms. The RPWG also requested that reviewers use additional criteria to make it easier to discern among the nominees. These two added categories included (a) an *extra value/wow factor* based on characteristics that could not have been required or expected by the committee but that set a particular nomination apart from others; and (b) the potential to be used for promotional purposes by TU.

The selection committee met and tabulated the number of similar choices, beginning with the first choice of each committee member for each category of award. Winners were then notified. At the scheduled awards ceremony, the Provost presented Certificates of Appreciation in padded folders, suitable for display purposes, to the winners. Monetary awards were distributed to employees via payroll checks and to departments via interdepartmental transfers as per university policy. The winners were thanked for their valuable contributions to promoting diversity and inclusiveness at TU, in alignment with the university's commitment to diversity.

Recommendations

Several research projects could be conducted over the next few years in order to improve the award process and assess the impact of the awards. The RPWG recommended that research be undertaken to investigate (a) the response rates of the various categories of the awards, (b) attitudinal changes regarding diversity issues in the various categories, (c) impacts perceived by the award winners, and (d) behavioral changes that have occurred on campus since the inception of these awards, such

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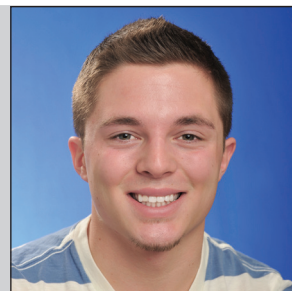
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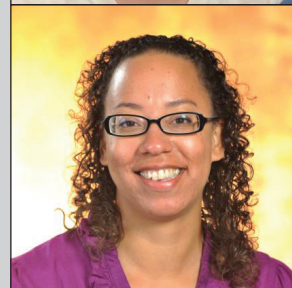
as a reduced number of reported bias incidents in the student residence halls, increased attendance at the multicultural conference, and greater inclusion of diversity activities for students, faculty, staff, and departments.

Conclusion

Because nominations were received and winners were rewarded in each award category, the promotion of the awards seemed to reach the intended audiences, and the nature and scope of the awards seemed to be relevant to the TU community. Forms for nomination and evaluation seemed to work as well. Research on the diversity awards program, however, should be conducted to determine if the program brought about actual changes in perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward diversity-related issues and if it thus made an impact as an incentive to fulfilling and sustaining the university's cultural shift toward an institutionalized model for diversity.

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Interview

Forming a Nation of Bilingual Citizens: An Interview with the Executive Director of the Costa Rica Multilingual Foundation

By Genevieve Brown and Beverly J. Irby

*T**his interview continues a series initiated by members of the* Bulletin's *Editorial Board. The goal of the series is to feature interviews conducted with Delta Kappa Gamma members or other educational leaders on a topic related to the theme of the issue. This interview focuses on a project to increase the competitiveness of Costa Rican citizens by promoting their acquisition of English as a second language.*

It has been almost 2 years since we met Marta Blanco, Executive Director of the Costa Rica Multilingual Foundation. She is a powerhouse when it comes to moving people to improve the economic and educational conditions of her fellow Costa Rican citizens, and she is passionate about enhancing the lives of children and teachers through the learning of English. She is a creative businesswoman and has a sense of political direction and educational need. That is why it is no wonder that Dr. Oscar Arias-Sanchez, former President of Costa Rica and 1987 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, named Marta as Executive Director of the Costa Rica Multilingual presidential program, which later became a foundation.

Marta, tell us about your position.
I have been serving as Executive Director of the Costa Rica Multilingual Foundation for 3 years now. In that position, I serve as the overall project director of the Ensenanza del Ingles como Lengua Extranjera [Teaching of English as a Foreign Language] (EILE).

What role does Costa Rica Multilingüe [Multilingual] (CRML) play in the country?
CRML is an organization that promotes PPP's (public private partnerships) to create synergy and improve the competitiveness of Costa Rica. We do this by playing three main roles explained in Figure 1: (a) catalyst, affecting public policy and country projects; (b) lobbyist for government, private sector, and national and international NGOs; and (c) manager of projects to begin and institutionalize the country's target efforts.

Figure 1. Main roles of the Costa Rica Multilingüe.

You have set out to improve the English-speaking abilities of Costa Ricans. How do you plan to achieve such a difficult task?
Within the foundation, we have identified four areas in which we have to work in order to improve the teaching and learning of English. These four areas are shown in Figure 2: (a) time, (b) programs of study, (c) resources, and (d) teachers. In the center of the model is coverage that results in areas of action for schools, universities, and general education of the society. Project EILE impacts all four areas, providing invaluable information that will be used to create public policy in this key area for the development of Costa Rica.
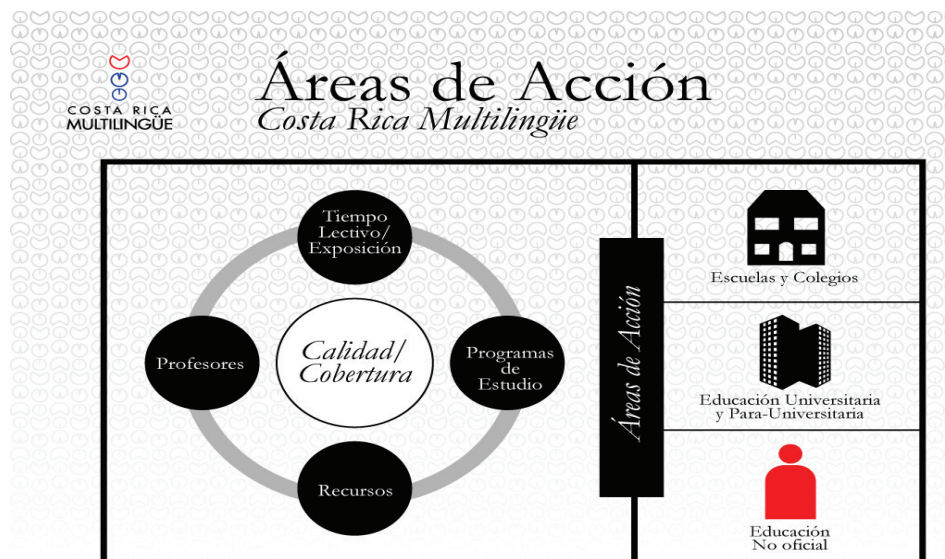

Figure 2. Four main areas of work for the Costa Rican Multilingüe.

Marta, tell us about the history and purpose of EILE.

In general terms, decisions for education investment are often made without having adequate information supporting them. The foundation is trying to change this trend by generating data and pertinent information that will allow the country to make efficient use of its limited resources in order to have more impact, thereby achieving the goals we have set ourselves as a country.

Never before has a project like EILE been implemented on a national scale, with national training to improve English language acquisition for students and teachers. The overall purposes of EILE are to implement a scientifically rigorous evaluation of technology-based instructional interventions for primary and secondary students whose first language is Spanish and to assess similar interventions for teachers across Costa Rica. Specifically, we are comparing a technology-supported English-language-acquisition intervention and the typical practice-English language-acquisition program in elementary and secondary schools. The goal of EILE is to determine what a technology-supported model is capable of achieving with Spanish-speaking students who are acquiring English while maintaining their native language.

We looked for researchers to carry out and help decide specifics, and 2 years ago we met two professors, one from Sam Houston State University and one from Texas A&M University. I knew they were the perfect duo to complement the project. EILE is funded primarily by the Inter-American Development Bank; the local partners are Costa Rica Multilingüe, the Costa Rica United States of America Foundation (CRUSA), the Public Education Ministry (MEP), and Intel, in collaboration with Texas A&M University-College Station and Sam Houston State University.

Marta, how many teachers are involved?

Currently, there are 53 secondary teachers and 76 elementary teachers. The secondary project is in the provinces of San Jose and Cartago, and the elementary project is taking place in the province of Alajuela. The schools in these regions run the gamut from rural, one-room schoolhouses to large, urban schools and everything in between. Of course, there is a larger component of the project that includes all teachers in Costa Rica. We are surveying the teachers to determine what they believe to be their best practices in teaching English as a second or foreign language.

Marta Blanco is Executive Director of the Costa Rica Multilingual Foundation in Costa Rica. The foundation, initially established as a program by 1987 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Oscar Arias-Sanchez, former president of Costa Rica, seeks to improve the competitiveness of that country. Marta oversees The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language project, which operates on a national scale to improve English language acquisition for students and teachers.

Beverly Irby, Ph.D., is the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs in the College of Education at Sam Houston State University. A member and past president of Upsilon Chapter (TX), Dr. Irby serves on the editorial board of the *Bulletin*.

Genevieve Brown, Ed.D., is the Dean of the College of Education at Sam Houston State University. Also a member and past president of Upsilon Chapter (TX), Dr. Brown is involved, with Dr. Irby, in the project that is described in this interview.

What advice would you give to females in high schools regarding English and their futures?
Not only for young women, but also for young men, employment possibilities greatly increase by becoming bilingual. In Costa Rica, knowing how to speak English alone will ensure a good job: in some areas, speaking English results in a salary increase twice as great as that achieved by knowing how to operate a computer. More women than men are studying foreign languages at a university level.

Costa Rica is noted for its strong female leaders. As you know, we currently have a female president. It seems that Costa Rican men are proud to have strong mothers, sisters, and wives. Many men say that they would rather work with women as they see them as more efficient and committed.

Marta, what are the most positive things you have observed about EILE?
First, teachers in the project are more enthusiastic and happy than they have been, and they are trying to take a role in the project: becoming leaders, trying to improve their own English, and trying to teach the children English in a different manner with technology.

Second, the teachers are excited to have computers in the schools.

Third, students have had higher attendance rates since the implementation of EILE. They want to come to school to work on the computer.

Fourth, in Project EILE, we are creating knowledge about what works best for our own students in Costa Rica in terms of language acquisition. We will be able to make data-based decisions.

Fifth, the project has had great support by the Ministry of Education, which sees it as a way to increase Costa Rican competitiveness in the world at large. I believe that is what is needed for sustainability. We are building capacity with the Ministry of Education to sustain such a project.

Marta, do you have any final words?
Project EILE is having a positive influence in the schools—on students, their teachers, their parents, and the principals. We, in Costa Rica, are happy to be a part of history, testing technology and its influence in teaching English language acquisition—creating knowledge!

Web Site Review

Web Review: Sites for Learning Foreign Languages and Appreciating Foreign Cultures
By Sigrún Klara Hannesdóttir

*T*his article is the first in a series of occasional book or Web site reviews contributed by members of the Bulletin's 2010–2012 Editorial Board. The author provides a review of electronic resources used in member countries to promote multilingualism as a path to greater competitiveness for young people. The article also meets one of the goals of DKG's Educational Excellence Committee by increasing members' global awareness.

The Delta Kappa Gamma Society is now operating in 17 countries in Europe and the Americas. The languages spoken in member countries number at least 10, including Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, German, Icelandic, Norwegian, Spanish, French and Swedish. Furthermore, several other languages are spoken within many of these countries. In a global marketplace, knowledge of other languages increases one's ability to succeed even as it enhances one's cultural awareness and sensitivity. In Europe in particular there is a great emphasis on foreign language learning and mobility of young people to visit, learn, and work in other countries. In this review we offer a very brief sample of sites or portals that are used for foreign language teaching in member states and can be accessed by all members to increase their understanding of our world.

> " *In a global marketplace, knowledge of other languages increases one's ability to succeed even as it enhances one's cultural awareness and sensitivity.* "

Worldwide Classroom: Consortium for International Education and Multicultural Studies: http://www.worldwide.edu/ci/index.html
This site provides a compilation of information about study programs around the world. The Consortium claims that the pursuit of study, vocational, and special interests abroad adds a unique, broadening framework to the understanding of another culture. Such pursuit enhances empathy, thus stimulating an appreciation for the richness of one's own cultural heritage.

Languages and Mobility within the European Union

✦ **http://www.eurfedling.org/**
The site provides a key to information on languages of the 23 member states of the European Union and six nonmember countries such as Norway and Iceland. The front page contains a list of 29 countries, including a brief description of each country and its language and offering the address of the official language institution, its Web site, and its e-mail address.

✦ **http://europa.eu/youth/studying/language_learning/index_eu_en.html**
The European Youth Portal "gives information on 8 main themes, covers 31 countries, and is available in 25 languages" to assist young people who move internationally. Themes such as studying, working, and volunteering are listed in a special menu on the left. Theme pages offer general information about the theme and links to where more information can be found.

✦ **http://www.euro-mobil.org**
Euromobil is a multimedia language-learning and information site promoting student mobility with demonstration exercises and information on beginner programs in Czech, Finnish, Hungarian, Polish, Portuguese, and Romanian and on advanced programs in English, French, and German. The programs can be downloaded free of charge.

✦ **http://europa.eu/languages/**
Europa languages portal is a gateway to information on languages in Europe. Information is arranged by subject: linguistic diversity, language learning, language teaching, translation, interpretation and language technology.

Dutch: http://europeesplatform.nl/sf.mcgi?333
The European Platform is a Dutch portal that focuses on "increasing the quality of education through internationalisation." The site starts with putting together courses of study, developing teaching materials, and giving advice and guidance to schools, and extends to testing the level of language competence and establishing networks.

English: http://www.dukeofdefinition.com/451.htm
Mr. Lettiere's English on the Web offers a variety of sources for teachers of English as a foreign language. It includes sections on vocabulary, literature, and writing.

Estonian: http://www.speakenglish.co.uk/?lang=et
This site offers an extensive range of materials to help students learn English. Students can acquire some basic phrases or vocabulary.

Dr. Sigrún Klara Hannesdóttir, Iceland, served as DKG's International Second Vice President for 2008-2010 and was appointed to the *Bulletin* Editorial Board for 2010–2014. She also served as Europe Regional Director for 2001-2004 and on the international Leadership Development and World Fellowships committees. Retired from her position as Director of the National and University Library of Iceland and Professor of Library Science at the University of Iceland, Sigrún was a founder of DKG's Iceland State in 1975.

Icelandic: http://www.tungumalatorg.is
This new site for Icelandic language teachers provides information on many languages as well as multicultural activites and a social network for language teachers. Languages include Icelandic, English, Spanish, Polish, and Dutch.

Spanish: http://www.auladiez.com/gratis.html
AulaDiez offers a variety of resources free of charge to study Spanish online, including tests in Spanish and interactive exercises. The Web site is available in English, French, Dutch, and Italian.

Swedish: www.skolverket.se
This site, which is available in English as well as Swedish, offers an entry into the Swedish school system, publications, and instructional material.

Literacy: http://www.google.com/literacy
The Literacy Projects offer resources for teachers, literacy organizations, and anyone interested in reading and education with links to literacy resources from around the world. These resources include e-learning videos, books, articles, reading groups, and blogs created in cooperation with UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning.

The Tlama Project: Canadian Leaders Supporting Education

By Lennor Stieda

This article offers a description of the history of Delta Kappa Gamma's involvement in the Tlama Educational Project, an initiative in the village of Tlamacazapa, Mexico, that is funded in part by a grant from the Delta Kappa Gamma Educational Foundation. The project's main areas of focus are community education and literacy. The Tihueliske[1] *project provides education for children and women. A second program,* Iquatlanesti, *is a yearly training school for* promoters, *the women and men of the village who choose to attend to become empowered to influence their family members to develop a healthier way of life. Descriptions of some aspects of village life are also included.*

First Exposure

In April of 2000, my husband and I were invited to visit the village of Tlamacazapa[2], Guerrero, Mexico, for the first time. My brother, Dr. Mundel, a university professor from Camrose, Alberta, had befriended Dr. Susan Smith[3] while working with Canada World Youth students in Cuernavaca, a university city in Morelos, Mexico. Dr. Smith is a nurse practitioner with a Ph.D. in education with focus on health and international development and the director of *Atzin, Mexico*, formerly called *Walking Together For Health and Development*. Dr. Smith invited us to come up to the village, more than 2 hours away from the city, in the neighboring state of Guerrero. We had come to Mexico to see something other than typical tourist fare and thus were thankful to be invited to spend the day walking through the village, from hut to hut, over rocky terrain, and past almost-empty wells. Pigs were roaming freely, and poverty stared us in the face.

A Tlama native dries palms for weaving in front of a typical home.

Information on Tlamacazapa, Mexico (Tlama for short)

In the village of Tlama, Mexico, population 6,200, 40% (n=527) of 1,314 school-aged children (6 to 15 years) are not in school. In addition, out of 1,362 women aged 16 to 40, 63% (n=860) cannot read. According to a survey done in 2005, among residents aged 16 to 70 years, only 50% of men and 27% of women can read. Since the invasion of Cortez Nahua[4], these people have lived in the mountains of Guerrero making their living by palm weaving, creating items that are subsequently transported for sale in the cities or at the beaches of Mexico.

Volunteers travel to the village every weekend to help. They include Spanish-speaking Canadian students, sent out for a year by the Canadian International Development Agency[5], as well as volunteers from universities in the United States and some Mexican volunteers from Cuernavaca, the university city in the neighboring state of Morelos. Community initiatives include Saturday clinics to teach about health and nutrition and a palm-weaving guild called *Zoyatl*, where women are taught how to improve their weaving so that their products garner higher prices and can be sold through the agency rather than at markets.

Formation of an Idea and Its Growth

On our return home, I simply could not get the children of Tlama out of my mind. After a small attempt at fundraising with school children, I decided to approach my own Delta Kappa Gamma (DKG) chapter and asked the members to consider education in Tlama as our global outreach as part of the DKG vision of "leading women educators impacting education worldwide." In Lambda Chapter, Victoria, British Columbia, we began to put our monies where our hearts were: supporting education in the village.

In 2003, Dr. Smith and the volunteers were starting a Health Promoters' School (now called *Iquatlanesti*) that needed funding. We began to funnel chapter funds toward this initiative. These schools are the "glue" that hold together the programs toward sustainable living, which include training in literacy, health and sanitation, and fostering income generation. For 10 days, villagers leave their village to travel to the city of Cuernavaca to participate in intense studying of literacy, numeracy, cultural heritage, health, and healing.

Dr. Smith invited me to return to Mexico for the April 2007 *Iquatlanesti* to participate and see the changes in Tlama. Using redeemed airline miles to fund my journey, I returned to Tlama and was amazed to see the wonderful changes that had taken place. Small initiatives for generation of income had been started, such as a store, quilting group, sewing group, construction crew, and more. Some of the young men had asked if they could join the women who had been attending the *Iquatlanesti*. This request was acknowledged, and thus slowly the results of consistent education were being realized in parts of Tlama. I was especially impressed with the *educatoras*, teenage girls (most attending Grade 9) who spent their Saturdays learning how to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic to the young, out-of-school children three afternoons a week following the end of their own school day. Another change I noticed was that children and adults participating in programs were regularly taught how and when to wash their hands. Sanitation, which was almost nonexistent in 2000, was now embedded in the family routines of participants in the *Iquatlanesti* and *Tihueliske* outreach.

Tlama children learn to wash their hands.

Sustainable Donors

I had heard about the DKG Educational Foundation and thought I should apply on behalf of the Health Promoters' School. I was so thankful when funding for the school was granted. To date, the Foundation grants for Tlama total $5000. The next step, with the assistance of the British Columbia state organization president, was to present the plight of this village to the members of the Canadian Forum. The *Toonies for Tlama Project* was first adopted as the Canadian project in 2007, renewed at the Forum meeting at the

International Convention in Chicago, and most recently, renewed once again as the 2010-2012 biennium project at the International Convention in Spokane.

Current Outreach

As sustainable donors, we can be thankful that the *Atzin* volunteers have been able to start helping the adult illiterate population. In 2009, the first class for illiterate women aged 13 to 40 was established, with materials and teacher in place. The first 15 women came to class and were beaming to learn finally how to write their names. It will take time, however, to convince the population that women can learn to read and write. Of the project, Dr. Smith wrote recently that

> the number of women attending fluctuates between 12 to18. Some of the strategies we use to attract women include announcements every week over the village loudspeakers about classes, passing out small program flyers to all women attending primary care and midwifery clinics, visiting primary and secondary schools to announce the program to attract those girls who are registered in school but still cannot read and write, and the educators always showing up: they do not miss classes; they always have materials on hand and can begin the same day that someone appears to inquire/register. (S. Smith, personal communication, November 16, 2010)

Attentive learners form a study circle.

Conclusion

Thanks to the continued efforts of the small Lambda Chapter in Victoria, the support of the Canadian Forum in adopting the Tlama Project as its national project for 5 years running, and the support of the DKG Educational Foundation, the healing of the community in Tlama promises to continue on a daily basis and into the future. Tlama provides a wonderful example of Canada's steps to realize the DKG vision of leading women educators impacting education worldwide.

Notes

[1] *Tihueliske* means *we can*; *Iquatlanesti* means *here comes the dawn*; and *Atzin* means *sacred water*.

[2] According to a 2008 census taken by UNICEF, Tlamacazapa is the poorest village in the poorest state, Guerrero, in Mexico. Check http://www.caminamosjuntos.org/about_tlama.php for further information about Tlama.

[3] Dr. Susan Smith received the 2008 Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Calgary.

[4] This was told to us on our first visit. A good book to read is *Conquest: Montezuma, Cortes, and the Fall of Old Mexico* by Hugh Thomas (Simon & Schuster, 1993).

[5] The Canadian International Development Agency is a branch of the Canadian government whose mission is to show leadership in helping people living in poverty at home and internationally.
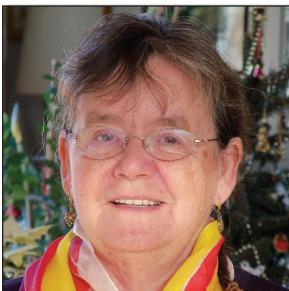
Lennor Stieda is a member of Lambda Chapter, Vancouver Island, British Columbia. She taught for 33 years, with assignments ranging from teaching English to adult refugees from Czechoslovakia in 1969 to teaching in a primary school in England from 1998 to 1999. Besides spearheading the Tlama project, Lennor is also a member of RESULTS Canada and hosts World College students when requested to help out. rollen@shaw.ca

Dynamic Presentations for Strong Leaders
By Ingibjörg B. Frímannsdóttir and Barbara Whiting

Effective presentation skills are important to all leaders and can be learned. This article focuses on how to prepare dynamic presentations using the keys to successful presentations: preparation, practice, tools/equipment, delivery and nonverbal communication, the flow of words, and great beginnings and endings. The authors share specific techniques and tips to help a presenter maximize confidence and convey messages. Detailed strategies for learning to control one's voice, making use of breathing techniques to diminish anxiety and to facilitate delivery, using notes or scripts efficiently, and utilizing audio-visual tools effectively are also provided.

The Challenge

Women leaders often blame the *glass ceiling* for their lack of success, but there can be other reasons for not reaching leadership potential. One reason may be inadequate skills in public speaking. A leader must be able to convey ideas and information clearly. Thus, a critical skill for a strong leader is effective presentation.

Many skills have to come together in an effective presentation: speaking with the right voice, using correct posture, enunciating clearly, sharing the material properly, and using the microphone correctly. This article will discuss the issues and skills that strong speakers need to consider in developing and presenting an effective speech.

Approximately 95% of all speakers experience some degree of anxiety or nervousness when speaking in public (Hamilton, 2008). In the life of every leader, however, there will be opportunities to make group presentations. One can learn to meet these challenges, to perfect one's presentation skills, and to enjoy presenting for any size audience. The secret is in the planning and preparing.

> *Glossophobia*: a noun meaning fear of public speaking.
>
> From the Greek *glossa*, meaning tongue, and *phobos*, fear or dread.

The Preparation

The most critical aspect of any dynamic presentation is the preparation, which begins with knowing one's purpose, audience, approach, materials, and the speaking environment. Before presenting, the speaker must know how large the group will be, where the presentation will be given, what time of day it will happen, and the length of time allotted. Also, it is imperative to find out what is on the schedule just before and immediately after one's presentation, who will be in the audience, and what their likely backgrounds are

regarding the topic. In what type of room will the presentation take place: large or small, with tables, or with chairs in rows? Will the speaker have access to equipment to enhance the presentation? All of this information will help develop the content of and the best format for the talk.

When constructing a dynamic presentation, it is good to start with brainstorming. Write down all the useful ideas and topics that come to mind on small cards, without being concerned about completing each thought or the order of the ideas. At a later stage, sort the cards into categories and expand on ideas so that they flow into a logical progression that will be easy for the audience to follow (Frímannsdóttir, 2007). Another alternative is to develop a mind map (Figure 1). A mind map is a strategy for organizing thoughts and incorporating many ideas.

Figure 1. Mind map: A schematic for collecting ideas and organizing thoughts. Draw by hand or see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_map for an electronic version.

The next step is to write out the complete presentation and practice reading it aloud from beginning to end. Work toward clarity: avoid slang and clumsy wording. Consider where to pause, where to look up at the audience, and when to allow for questions. After adjustments have been made, make the final printed version easy to read by using a large font and space between lines. Another option is to put the talk on large cards to reference during delivery. Never put the speech on projected slides and read it from there.

The magic word for good speeches is *practice*. Read the speech out loud in front of the mirror or in front of another person. Record the speech and listen to how it sounds. One cannot practice enough. Time the presentation and respect the time allotted. Extending a presentation time may interfere with other speakers. An overly lengthy talk may lose the attention of the audience as they begin to think of what is next on the schedule (Frímannsdóttir, 2007).

The Set-up

The set-up is one essential ingredient to an effective presentation. Before the talk, go to the room and check the environment: Is there a lectern? Is it the right height? Will the speaker be on a stage? What type of microphone will be used? How are the chairs arranged? Is it necessary to change or adjust any aspect of the arrangement (O´Rourke, 2008)?

Speakers must also know how to use microphones correctly. There are four types of microphones: stationary, lavaliere, cordless, and handheld. If it is necessary to use a handheld style, one needs to plan how to manage notes. The lavaliere microphone clips to one's clothing, and the controls are meant to be in a pocket or clipped to a belt. Think about that when selecting an outfit for the day.

Whatever style of microphone is used, one must try it before the presentation. Test the volume to avoid echoes. Measure how close to one's mouth the microphone must be for clarity. An easy guideline is to hold a microphone one hand's width away from the mouth (4-6 inches) when you speak.

Tools and Equipment

Tools and equipment may be useful in making a presentation, but sometimes the technology overshadows the content of the talk. Therefore, one has to consider what equipment may enhance the presentation and what may take the focus away from the content.

When using an overhead projector with transparencies, the projector must be set up before the presentation and the best location for the projector marked. If the speaker has to make adjustments to the placement of the transparencies during the talk, the delay can be distracting to the audience and to the speaker.

There are many advantages to using carefully planned visuals as part of a presentation. They are easy to use and can add clarity. Well-made visuals keep the attention of the listeners, but poorly made visuals can be distracting and confusing. Visuals can help one present complex ideas clearly and concisely.

Presentation software, such as PowerPoint, is easy to use, but one has to know how to develop a PowerPoint presentation and then how to use it effectively. There are simple guidelines for presenters to follow:

✦ Slides should only be used if they will enhance the presentation.

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- Each slide should be clear and concise.
- Use a font that is easy to read from any area of the room.
- Use bulleted phrases, not whole sentences unless they are quotes.
- Use no more than five bullets per slide.
- Fewer slides are better than too many.

Slides help the audience to follow the speaker's key ideas and can be very useful for emphasizing critical points. When there are too many slides, however, they will confuse the audience and may do more harm than good (Abrams, 2008).

If using PowerPoint, the speaker must remember to look at the audience. Talk to the people, not to the screen or to the computer. Use a light pointer to draw attention to details on the slide or use the mouse to move the cursor to draw attention to a specific point on the screen. Avoid turning one's back to the audience by pointing on the screen. Slides should support what the speaker is saying and only be used if one feels comfortable using them, not because he or she thinks it must be done (O´Rourke, 2008). In today's world, some of the best presenters do not use any slides, e.g. world famous presenter Amanda Gore, who never uses slides.

PowerPoint slides make easy handouts. If one decides to make handouts for the audience, it is important to plan ahead regarding when and how they will be distributed.

The Delivery

After careful preparation and the development of the content of a presentation, one must consider how it will be delivered. Successful delivery takes into account the voice, breathing, body language, and the flow of words.

> "*The best way to find one's right voice range is to listen to how one sounds when relaxed, such as when talking to friends and family.*"

Voice and breathing. A presenter's voice is a very important part in conveying to the audience a tone of sincerity and trustworthiness. Therefore, it is vital to use one's true voice, in one's correct voice range. Beware of trying to make the voice *sound good* by lowering it or making it high in pitch. A voice sounds best when one uses a natural voice (Frímannsdóttir, 2007). Many speakers do not know how to use their voices and under stress may tend to use a high-pitched voice and sometimes even a screeching tone. The best way to find one's *right* voice range is to listen to how one sounds when relaxed, such as when talking to friends and family.

Vocal coaches advise three techniques to help individuals use their authentic voice:

1. Open your mouth wider and deliver a stronger vocal tone. That would be your natural voice—the voice you should use when you are relaxed and when you are lecturing.

2. Breathe! Your voice is a major source of energy and can bring a sense of energy and a feeling of commitment to your words. To get full control of your voice you have to be able to control your breathing. Use deep breathing while waiting to come to the lectern or stage. As you wait to speak, sit in a relaxed position. Sit firmly on the chair and have your back away from the chair's back. Imagine a string coming up through your spine from your buttocks to the top of your head, and then imagine pulling the string. Sit tall and breathe deeply all the way down to your stomach. Feel your body relax (Frímannsdóttir, 2007).

3.   Avoid coffee or foods that irritate or dry the vocal cords. Drink plenty of water, especially the night before or the morning of the presentation. Keep your vocal apparatus and yourself hydrated (Utterback, 1995).

Nonverbal communication. Most communication is nonverbal. Good speakers pay attention to their body language, which includes facial gestures, posture, movements, eye contact, and hand gestures. Posture also influences how a voice sounds. It is important to keep one's back straight and head upright. Good posture allows an open, unobstructed flow of air.

In the Western world, eye contact is significant. Speakers must keep steady eye contact with the audience, not be bent over their notes. Make an effort to establish eye contact around the room, looking into the eyes of individuals, not over their heads. Look to each section of the audience: back left, middle, back right, front left, and front right. Try to catch the audience's eyes and grab their attention. Imagine the words flying out of one's mouth and into the ears of the listeners. The audience will react by nodding if their attention has been awakened and the message is clear.

The speaker's gestures should be natural, not dramatic or theatrical. Do not lean on the lectern. Be open, outgoing, and relaxed. Smile! A smile is the shortest distance between people and therefore provides a good way to connect with the audience. An easy way to develop warmth and a connection with the audience is to imagine there is a zipper on one's chest. Unzip it and open the chest to let warmth emanate over the audience. Warmth and enthusiasm will draw in the attention of the audience. Sometimes nervousness or anxiety can build an imagined wall or curtain between the presenter and the audience. When that happens it is important to *pull back the curtain and knock down the wall* with warmth and openness.

Flow of words. One's words have to be free to get wings and fly. Therefore, is it important to prepare the text as well as possible but not be bound to it at the lectern. When preparing the text for reading it aloud, one should use a large, easy-to-read font and leave several spaces in between lines; such spacing will make it easier to glance at the text and not lose the place. To make the text readable, one can mark it, e.g. by underlining or highlighting key phrases as reminders of what points to emphasizing. Edward R. Murrow, one of the most famous of newscasters, always marked his scripts (Utterback, 1995, Figure 2).

Some sections of a talk are essential; others can be deleted if time runs out. Print in color or highlight the sections that may be cut if time is running short. The beginning and the closing of one's talk should never be cut.

Speeches are made up of words that must become alive when spoken. Thus, it is very
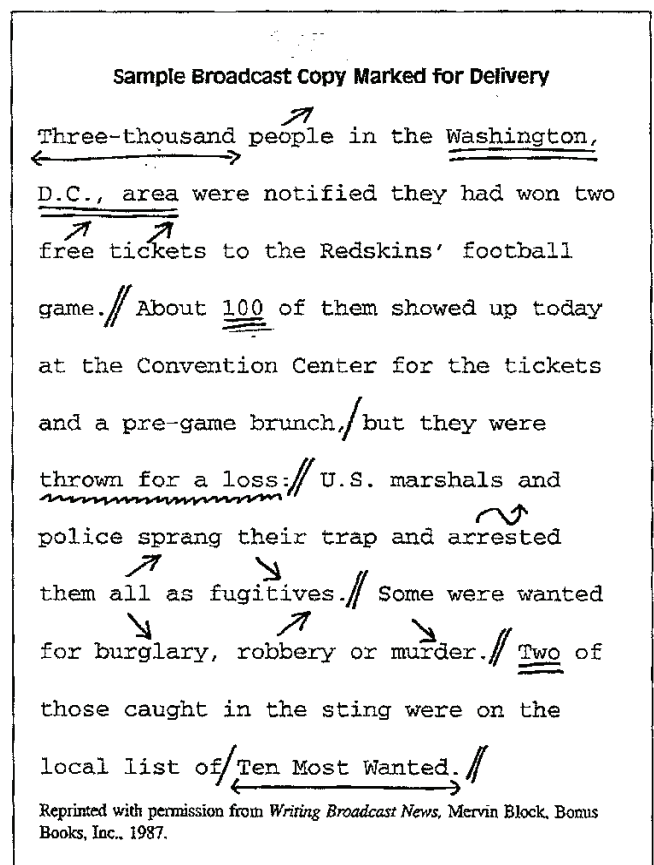

Figure 2. Personal marking style by Edward R. Murrow (Utterback, 1995). Note the use of slash marks to mark pauses, a single slash (/) at commas, and double slash marks (//) for longer pauses at periods. Reprinted by permission.

important for the speaker to try to keep the enunciation natural. Work on phrasing, not on emphasizing individual words; keep each thought distinct and let the ideas flow. One should avoid sounding stilted or reading word for word. The sentences must not trail off, and the speaker must be aware of letting the tone drop at the end of a sentence or thought. Voices tend to start loud at the opening of each sentence then collapse toward the end (Etherington, 2006).

The speaker need not be afraid of brief silences. The space between thoughts can be as powerful as the thoughts themselves (Grant-Williams, 2002). Notice how comedians make use of a pause to hold a listener's attention before giving the punch line. Think of how Winston Churchill used pauses to emphasize ideas. "This is not the end…This is not even the beginning of the end…But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning" (Churchill, 1942).

The Right Look
The selection of appropriate clothing is critical, as appearance gives the first impression. Often a presenter is criticized for appearance even before beginning the talk. Choose clothes that are comfortable, professional, and not visually distracting. A female presenter should beware of large earrings, short skirts, and low-cut tops and, if she will be on a raised stage, should strongly consider wearing slacks. One's hair should not hang over the face. It is important for the audience to see the speaker's eyes (Frimannsdottir, 2007).

> " *The skill of being an effective speaker—one to whom people listen and from whom people learn—can be developed and mastered.* "

Great Beginnings
It is important for leaders to present with confidence. When stepping up to the microphone, take a deep breath, stand tall, and say to oneself: "This is going to be great" (Collins, 1998).

Plan the opening of the presentation carefully. Know it by heart in order to get off to a strong start. A strong beginning will capture the audience's attention and give you confidence. Tell listeners what you are going to tell them, when you are going to finish, and, if appropriate, when there is going to be a break for coffee, a stretch, or a meal. Clarify whether you are going to permit questions during the lecture or after it (Frímannsdóttir, 2007).

Positive Endings
Some say that listeners remember best the beginning and the end of a talk. Thus, it is as essential for a speaker to practice the conclusion of the presentation as it is to practice the beginning. Determine two or three major take-away thoughts for the audience to remember. Recap and summarize important points along the way. Never leave out the ending. Memorize the ending so that it can be presented with strength and confidence.

If questions are permitted and it is time to stop the question period, the speaker should not cut off the questions suddenly but warn the audience, e.g., by saying, "We have time for two more questions"–and then hold to that statement! End within the allotted time (O´Rourke, 2008).

In Conclusion

The skill of being an effective speaker—one to whom people listen and from whom people learn—can be developed and mastered. A strong leader must be such an effective presenter. One can continue to improve by observing good speakers, studying speeches, learning from mistakes, analyzing what goes smoothly and what is not perfect, and continuing to improve with each new opportunity.

Prepare, know your purpose, and practice, practice, practice. Begin well and end well. Be aware of the audience and their reactions during the presentation. Respond with openness and enthusiasm. Audiences remember the presentation content in this order: everything they see, the tone of the speaker's voice, and lastly the text or content. Poet Maya Angelou said it well: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel" (Kelly, 2003, p. 263). One of the essential skills of a strong leader is the ability to make effective presentations that will inspire others, present ideas, and persuade others to action.

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Empowering Paraprofessionals through Professional Development

By Barbara McKenzie

*P*araprofessionals in special education settings serve an important role in the education of students with disabilities, but they very often do not receive the same level of professional development given to other service providers. Ongoing professional development is a critical component in retaining paraprofessionals. An urban school district in Colorado implemented a paraprofessional development program that produced three significant outcomes. First, retention of special education paraprofessionals increased. Second, several special education paraprofessionals chose to enter a teacher education program to secure their teaching license in special education. Third, collaboration among IEP team members increased. Professional development topics included Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004, individual learner characteristics, instructional strategies, behavior management, Response to Intervention, and case law.

Motivation for a Paraprofessional Development Program

Why form a paraprofessional development program? An urban school district in Colorado provided professional development for special education teachers, speech and language clinicians, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and psychologists. However, there was little professional development for special education paraprofessionals. This lack of opportunity contributed to paraprofessional turnover, job dissatisfaction, and low morale. District goals for this program were to enhance the knowledge and skills of paraprofessionals, develop an understanding of research-based practices, provide a venue for collaboration and problem solving, and increase collaboration among IEP (Individual Education Program) team members.

Actions

The director of special education initiated discussions with district principals and paraprofessionals regarding the need for paraprofessional training. After obtaining support from both groups, the director designated funds to pay paraprofessionals for a 1-day training prior to the beginning of each school year. Additionally, the district allocated funds to pay paraprofessionals to attend monthly meetings. To determine areas of content focus, all paraprofessionals completed a needs assessment. Results of the needs assessment helped shape the trainings and monthly meetings.

Content Focus

At the beginning of each school year, all district special education paraprofessionals participate in a 1-day *Welcome Back* training. Newly hired paraprofessionals receive a paraprofessional handbook (see Figure), and returning paraprofessionals receive updates to their handbooks. After breakfast, attendees divide into two groups for the morning session: newly hired paraprofessionals and returning paraprofessionals. Training for newly hired paraprofessionals includes the classified personnel evaluation process and review of the code of conduct, professional ethics standards, confidentiality guidelines, and all roles and responsibilities. While this new paraprofessional training takes place, returning paraprofessionals receive training in their area of specific need or interest, including topics such as Response to Intervention, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and assistive technology. Both groups of paraprofessionals then join for lunch before beginning the afternoon session.

During lunch, district leaders distribute schedules for professional development trainings and department meetings for the year. After lunch, returning paraprofessionals attend sessions on their choice of topic, such as crisis prevention and intervention training, functional behavior assessment, or how to write behavior intervention plans. Newly hired paraprofessionals attend sessions on IEPs, students with significant needs, and accommodations and modifications.

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Figure. Table of contents for paraprofessional notebook used during paraprofessional-development sessions.

Active Learning and Coherence

Department meetings take place in September, October, November, January, February, and May. Topics for the meetings may include making choices for students with severe disabilities (Stafford, 2005), supporting a smooth transition from elementary to middle school (Carter, Clark, Cushing, & Kennedy, 2005), or the assignment of individual paraprofessionals to individual students (Giangreco, Yuan, McKenzie, Cameron, & Fialka, 2005). Journal articles supporting meeting topics are included in the

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paraprofessionals' handbooks. Each paraprofessional must read the appropriate journal article before attending department meetings.

The importance of depth versus breadth is another component of the professional development program. Training sessions with specific content focus, such as understanding IEPs, enable the paraprofessionals to become active participants in the IEP process. Case studies presented during monthly meetings provide an opportunity for paraprofessionals to practice newly acquired skills.

The result of this active learning process is that paraprofessionals have become excited about putting the research into practice. They have also begun to demonstrate more self-confidence and professionalism in their roles. In the monthly meetings, paraprofessionals receive the same training as all other service providers. For example, after a state audit of the Office of Special Education Programs revealed needs in the area of transition services for students, all service providers, including paraprofessionals, received training in how to write postsecondary IEP goals.

Increased Retention of Special Education Paraprofessionals
Lack of administrative support and respect, few opportunities for career advancement, and inadequate wages are contributing factors to paraprofessional turnover (Tillery, Werts, Roark, & Harris, 2003). This professional development program aimed to lower turnover rates by providing a venue for collaboration and problem solving among paraprofessionals and support from both the director of special education and special education coordinators.

After the implementation of this program, one paraprofessional commented, "I feel like we are finally being heard, and our concerns are being validated." Additionally, paraprofessionals with expertise in specific areas, such as assistive technology, have begun to copresent with special education service providers during district professional development trainings. This has provided additional opportunities for paraprofessionals to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Paraprofessionals Entering Teacher Education Programs
The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) requires paraprofessionals to complete at least 2 years of higher education, hold an associate's degree, or pass a competency exam. At the end of the first year of the paraprofessional-development program, 3 of the district's 45 special education paraprofessionals decided to pursue a program of study for teacher licensure in special education. One state university program encourages this trend by suggesting that paraprofessionals keep their jobs in the morning and attend classes in the afternoons and evenings. The university also offers courses in block formats, so that the paraprofessionals can complete general studies requirements within 5 weeks.

Increased Collaboration among IEP Team Members
Ongoing communication is an integral part of collaborative IEP teams. French (1998) conducted a pilot study that examined teachers' perceptions of the roles, performance, and preparation of paraprofessionals. Those perceptions were then compared to self-reports completed by the paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals believed their main purpose was to provide additional help in meeting the needs of their students. Teachers were divided in their responses. Some teachers believed paraprofessionals assisted students, while other teachers believed paraprofessionals assisted the teachers. The district addressed this uncertainty regarding the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals by encouraging

weekly collaboration meetings.

District leaders encouraged special education teachers and paraprofessionals to meet on a weekly basis to review lesson plans, evaluate students' progress by monitoring data, and discuss solutions to student, parent, and teacher issues. Weekly meetings encouraged team members to get to know each other and build a stronger sense of collegiality, as opposed to only meeting when problems arose.

Conclusion

Delivery of a continuum of services demands well-trained paraprofessionals and service providers. This district originally held monthly meetings for special education teachers, speech and language clinicians, psychologists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists but did not include special education paraprofessionals in the meetings. When they implemented a paraprofessional department and invited paraprofessionals to attend monthly meetings, the meetings became a venue for collaboration and problem solving. All attendees benefitted from reading and discussing journal articles with a strong focus on transferring the research into practice.

The implementation of a paraprofessional department contributed to the level of professionalism and pride among all paraprofessionals. The long-term outcomes included increased retention rates of special education paraprofessionals, increased enrollment of paraprofessionals in special education teaching-licensure programs, and increased collaboration among IEP Team members.

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Interdisciplinary Role Play: Nursing and Theater Students Advance Skills in Communication

By Susan Reams and Carol Bashford

*T*his article describes the collaboration of nursing and theater faculty to create an experiential learning activity to benefit students in both disciplines. Nursing students interviewed theater students acting as patients. A significant number of nursing students reported an increased level of confidence in approaching their first real patient as a result of participating in the theater-student interview activity. Theater students had the unique opportunity to use improvisation as a dramatic technique. This learning activity demonstrates how disciplines can interact to provide a framework for students to learn in a reflective manner.

Communication skills are imperative in today's complex world. This is particularly true in disciplines that rely heavily on the processing of exchanges of information. For example, the disciplines of nursing and theater share an emphasis on oral and nonverbal performance. Communication skills are among the numerous clinical decision-making skills of a registered nurse (Standing, 2007). Nursing and theater faculty at a public university in Ohio identified the need to revise their pedagogical approach to facilitate learning to close the gaps in discipline-specific communication skills. In an attempt to enhance nursing students' confidence with their first patient interview, the authors collaborated with theater faculty to create a mutually beneficial, interdisciplinary learning activity.

Kleehammer, Hart, and Keck (1990) acknowledged that nursing faculty found beginning nursing students were anxious about what would happen when they approached a patient for the first time. Current teaching practices did not help students achieve sufficient self-confidence with communication and knowledge. Concerned about student levels of anxiety, the authors set out to design a new learning activity.

Knowing how to interview is the result of building a framework for organizing the interview questions and of developing spontaneous, clinical-decision-making skills as the health history process is adapted based on patient responses. Strategies that involved nursing students in practicing interview skills with one another allowed students to review content but did not develop confidence and knowledge of the interviewing process. When nursing students interviewed one another—one as the patient and the other as the nurse—they unconsciously provided cues or assisted their peer in a knowing way. Faculty observed nursing students were able to collect basic demographic information but

had difficulty regarding more personalized information. Students struggled with how to phrase questions in sensitive areas such as spirituality or sexuality. Students also reported uncertainty as to how they might be perceived by the patient.

At the same time, theater faculty identified difficulties for nontraditional students on regional campuses. The typical outlet of a university theatrical performance required evening hours, extensive set preparation, and rehearsals requiring substantial human and financial resources and thus posed significant challenges. The theater faculty sought advanced opportunities for theater students to develop improvisational skills in a practical manner during class hours. Ultimately, the interdisciplinary goal for this project was that both nursing and theater students would benefit from communicating and interpreting verbal and nonverbal responses from each other in a controlled imitation set in a convincingly real environment.

Literature Review

Freshwater and Stickley (2003) proposed that emotionally intelligent curricula in nursing include strategies such as supportive supervision and mentorship, opportunities for working creatively with the arts and humanities, and a focus on development of self and diagnostic relationships. In line with this thinking, nursing faculty should strive to create learning experiences that help create a foundation of skills and confidence (Sprengel, 2004). Students need to transform knowledge embedded within the health history and interviewing process toward a confident, organized, reflective experience.

Experiential learning provides an opportunity for students to practice nurse-patient interviewing skills in a realistic manner that will enable them to transfer the skill set to the clinical setting. Learning how to prepare for a health history interview, adapting questions, and altering the sequence of questions are experiences of progressive levels of critical thinking and clinical decision-making. Role playing requires the students to use critical thinking as they attend and respond to the circumstances being presented (Bastable, 2006). Role play allows students to explore behaviors and make decisions in an environment that allows experimentation without risk (Bradshaw & Lowenstein, 2007).

The ability of nursing students to respond to patients' emotions is a core communication skill (Cole & Bird, 2000; Makoul, 2001), and researchers have studied various ways to develop this skill. In a study by Esposito (2009), health service students reported an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses after conducting mock counseling sessions with acting students playing the role of a client with a problem. Bastable (2008) focused on the use of structured experiences that facilitated the ability of students to reorganize concepts to create meaning. Crofts (2008) wrote specifically about the benefits of providing a learning strategy that allowed nursing students to interact with theater students acting as patients, suggesting the approach provided fluidity of reacting

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and responding to human emotions and behaviors in a way that is difficult to achieve, for example, with a high-fidelity simulation manikin. Rosenbaum and Ferguson (2006) found nursing students learned foundational skills in how to communicate in challenging situations by using lay persons portraying patient-generated cases during a small-group interview format.

The combination of reacting and responding to patient responses is the foundation for clinical decision-making. Ulrich and Glendon (2005) argued that having students experience new concepts through role playing assisted students in integrating the new concepts in a safe environment, producing higher quality problem solving as well as improved student self-esteem. Mavis (2006) revealed that faculty who served as mock patients were most intimidating to students but provided students with the most helpful feedback. Mavis also found that students were less anxious when peers role played as patients, but they rated the encounter as a less valuable experience.

Researchers from other fields echoed the benefits of real-life simulations. Social work students rated their experience with conducting an assessment interview of theater students posing as patients as useful for practicing interview skills (Petracchi & Collins, 2006). Similarly, Lambourn (2005) reported drama students enhanced their skills in adaptability and ability to improvise as a benefit from role play using improvisation techniques.

Planning the Theater-Student-as-Patient Learning Activity
The authors began to formulate how an ideal teaching and learning strategy might incorporate the utilization of theater students as patients to strengthen foundational communication skills. The authors initiated conversation with theater faculty regarding the possibility of having nursing students interview theater students acting as patients. Nursing and theater faculty clarified the needs of each student group and logistics for the project. Nursing faculty provided a variety of patient scenarios, including data on the patient symptoms, possible causes of their illnesses, and socioeconomic characteristics. This information provided a framework for a theater student to research and give dimension to a patient. This outline—without suggestion as to who the patient should be—required the theater students to engage in character development.

> *Ultimately, the interdisciplinary goal for this project was that both nursing and theater students would benefit from communicating and interpreting verbal and nonverbal responses from each other in a controlled imitation set in a convincingly real environment.*

Faculty received approval for the teaching strategy from the university's Institutional Review Board. All participating students acknowledged consent to participate in the study. Theater faculty interviewed and conducted auditions of theater-student applicants for this project to assess skills in communication, improvisation, and character research and to identify theater students who would be appropriate for this project. Theater faculty informed successful candidates about their roles and responsibilities as actors and actresses playing patients. Theater students developed

patient characters through deep research and were informed that they were not to reveal their own personal information but to portray a patient during the interview process. The theater faculty mentored students to research conditions provided by nursing faculty in order to understand how a patient might present under those conditions. Theater faculty also guided the theater students' development of the characters' personalities, behavior, social history, and past medical history for the interviews.

Method

Six theater students and 27 nursing students participated in this project over 2 days. Nursing students were invited to interview a theater student acting as a patient for 20 minutes during regular class time in the nursing resource center. Students had been informed about the opportunity to participate in this learning activity 2 months prior to the target day. Students were informed about setting, potential topics, and interview length. All nursing students began their interviews by discussing the current health problem (symptom analysis) and demographic data. Due to time constraints that prohibited completion of an entire health history, nursing students were assigned focus areas of the health history such as self-esteem and self-concept, interpersonal relationships, coping and stress, personal habits, and environmental health.

The health interview activity was conducted 1 week before the nursing students were to interview patients in the actual clinical setting. Both nursing and theater students completed a survey prior to and immediately following the health history interview. In this survey, they rated their self-confidence, self-awareness, preparedness, and believability of the theater student as the patient. A final survey was administered upon completion of the first clinical experience, in which the nursing students conducted a health history interview of an actual patient at the clinical agency. The validity of the survey tool was determined through expert review and use of the tool in a pilot study.

Following the actual interviews, nursing and theater students convened with faculty to reflect upon and share perceptions. This provided opportunities for nursing students to hear patients' perceptions and observations about their communication techniques. This sharing experience also provided insight for the theater students regarding their authenticity as patients. Faculty facilitated the debriefing session, allowing students to reflect on their unique perspectives as either patients or health care providers. Facilitation centered on thoughts about the encounter, concepts learned, and consideration of how actions or words affected them during the interview process. Student comments during the debriefing and on the surveys supported the learning value for this method of pedagogy.

What We Found

Preinterview survey: Interviews of theater students. Prior to interviewing the theater students as patients, 74% of nursing students indicated they were not confident in initiating the health history interview with the theater students in the classroom setting. Seventy-eight percent did not feel prepared for this experience. In anticipation of their first clinical experience, 81% of the students indicated that they did not feel confident to conduct the health history interview with the patient in the clinical setting. This was an interesting finding given that the students had the health history document in their syllabus, a significant amount of class discussion was devoted to this topic, and the setting was the nursing resource center where the role-playing interviews took place.

Postinterview survey: Interviews of theater students. Students responded to a

survey immediately following the interview with the theater students as patients. Ninety-one percent rated the theater student as being believable as a patient. The postinterview survey revealed that 70% of the nursing students still did not feel prepared for the real-patient interviews. Seventy-one percent of the nursing students indicated that their communication skills were enhanced by the experience. Eighty-seven percent reported that they gained insight and enhanced self-awareness in their role as nurse through the experience. Notably, 97% of the students advocated that the health history exercise with theater students continue in the curriculum.

Several themes emerged from the comments written by students on the postinterview survey. First, 47% acknowledged increased self-confidence and comfort level for interviewing strangers. In addition, students reported specific benefits of becoming aware of their own body language and of learning how to ask questions and interpret patients' responses. They noted experiencing several axioms of effective therapeutic communication, such as interpreting and responding to the unexpected comments of patients, choosing words and questions carefully, and responding to *stumping phrases* comments by the patient that leave the student nurse stumped as to what to say next.

Postinterview survey: Interviews of real patients. Eighty-one percent of the students reported feeling confident approaching patients in the hospital once they had done so. This demonstrated an increase in confidence, as only 19% were confident prior to interviewing the theater students and 48% expressed confidence after interviewing the theater students. After the interview with the real patients, 88% felt prepared for future patient interviews; in contrast, only 22% had felt prepared prior to interviewing the theater students as patients. Following the theater-student-as-patient interview activity, 87% indicated an increased level of self-awareness; 96% indicated an increased level of self-awareness after the real patient interview, a 9% improvement.

Discussion

The data supported the value of this learning activity. Overall, researchers noted a 62% increase in confidence following the health interview activities with both the theater students and the real patients. Notably, significant incremental increases in confidence occurred following the theater-student-as-patient interview and following the real-patient interview. These data demonstrated that the health interview activity is a process for gaining confidence but is not a substitute for interaction with patients.

Students became reflective learners in response to their experiences during this study, resulting in the 9% improvement in self-awareness from theater-student to real-patient interview. The theater-student activity appears to have given the nursing students an opportunity to conduct their first real-patient interviews with a high level of self-awareness. This new self-awareness may have contributed to increased levels of self-confidence. Theater students acting as patients created opportunities for nursing students to experience learning in the advanced levels of the cognitive and affective learning domains. These opportunities added value due to the importance of self-reflection for nursing students.

Nursing students reported a significant level of feeling unprepared for the interview. Twenty-two percent reported feeling prepared prior to the theater-student-as-patient interviews, and only 30% felt prepared after those interviews. Yet nursing students' perceptions of preparedness increased to 88% following the real-patient interviews. The activity provided an opportunity for nursing students to identify lack of knowledge of a specific functional pattern, to plan for flow of the interview process, and to recognize

the need to be flexible in order to handle unpredictable patient responses. This surge of improved preparation after the real-patient interview may have resulted from students discovering a knowledge gap and then utilizing appropriate resources. Student comments on the survey following their interviewing of theater students supported this conclusion: "At first I did not feel prepared, but once I took the textbook and went through each section I felt more prepared." "Practice as well as taking time/reviewing proper questions to ask helped." "I reviewed the documents in the Jarvis book [text related to physical examination and health assessment]."

> "*Theater students acting as patients created opportunities for nursing students to experience learning in the advanced levels of the cognitive and affective learning domains.*"

The theater-student-as-patient interview provided a significant opportunity for nursing students to experience the interview process with unknown persons. Nursing students shared that although peer-to-peer role play with one student as the nurse and the other student as the patient was helpful, the challenge was more realistic when the patient was not known to the student. This experience provided an opportunity for students to reflect and examine reactions to an interpersonal exchange with a stranger.

During the debriefing, both nursing and theater students shared feelings about specific student-to-student interactions that created an opportunity for reflection and synthesis of concepts. Students openly described observations, revealed feelings associated with specific encounters, and shared strengths and weaknesses during the interview. This open discussion allowed students to clarify and seek information regarding assumptions and observed behaviors. The debriefing further enhanced the dimension of information exchange not typically available in the clinical setting, where nursing students are not able to seek clarification with their patients on the same level as was possible with the theater students. For example, a theater student acting as a patient reported a history of drug use in his past. He now presented with pain. The theater student as patient wanted to be asked about continuing substance abuse, but the novice nursing student avoided this information due to fear of asking questions about drug use. In the debriefing, all students came to understand the importance of asking this direct question about current drug usage. In addition, all of the nursing students were exposed to the patient's perspective regarding the impact of an interviewer's failure to ask a key question on a sensitive topic.

Conclusion

The literature revealed that hiring professional actors had been utilized as a teaching strategy for training nurse practitioner and medical students but was quite expensive (Mavis, 2006). Using theater students as patients avoided the cost factor and supported dual experiential learning for both theater and nursing students. As budgets shrink due to economic factors, the theater-student-acting-as-patient approach becomes a viable option. Academic benefits replace monetary challenges associated with paid actors.

This project also addressed issues identified by the theater faculty. Acting as patients allowed theater students to practice improvisation skills in an applied theater setting. Theater faculty perceived the health-interview activity model to be an important recruitment

element for advanced theater students and theater faculty on a regional campus where human and financial resources are often limited. One theater student stated,

> This project gave me the chance to do believable character work and to take a single scenario and refine it through rigorous repeated trial. On this day, I indulged myself and delighted with the full knowledge that I was doing a legitimate service.

By practicing repeatedly within a safe environment, nursing students can gain the confidence they need to approach their patients and interdisciplinary colleagues. The theater-student-as-patient methodology of teaching provided a cost-effective, student-centered approach to learning. Through this project, the researchers attempted to raise awareness on the part of nursing students, not only about implementation of the interview process, but also about how their individual approach might be interpreted by a patient. In order to evolve with healthcare's changing tides, educators need patients' perspectives.

This interdisciplinary project set the tone for nursing students at the onset of their career even as it provided enrichment to theater students. Such interdisciplinary learning could be replicated readily; the approach is not exclusive to the authors' setting but could be pursued in any academic partnership.

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An Investigation of School Leadership Priorities

By Marcia D. Muse and Lisa M. Abrams

*T*his article describes a qualitative research study that examined the leadership and management experiences of 25 elementary principals in the central Virginia region. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards were used as the framework to explore the principals' job responsibilities and how they prioritized the many facets of their administrative function. It is clear from the literature that the job demands of school principals continue to grow and escalate. Thus, with increasing accountability, it is essential that school leaders learn to balance the responsibilities of being the instructional leader as well as the school manager. The study findings revealed that although instructional leadership was a priority, it was often overshadowed by school managerial demands. Principals described their administrative role as having multiple and competing responsibilities. The findings suggested that an increased focus on professional development for administrators in the area of management is especially needed.

Implicit in current national and state education policy is the assumption that effective principal leadership is central to student achievement. As the leaders of the school, principals have tremendous influence over the values, beliefs, practices, and efforts that guide the faculty, staff, students, and parents (Lashway, 2002). In fact, the single most powerful force for improving school effectiveness and for achieving excellence in education is the school principal (Anderson, 1989; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Sykes, King, & Patrick, 2002).

All principals and schools are different; as a result, leadership necessarily takes a variety of forms. In addition, school leadership has evolved dramatically over the past 30 years (Catano & Stronge, 2006; McEwan, 2003). In the 1970s and early 1980s the school administrator typically focused on the management areas of planning, controlling, leading, and organizing (McEwan, 2003). However, today there is little doubt the public eye is keenly focused on school principals to deliver results in the form of increased student achievement. Succinctly expressed,

> accountability is not just another task added to the already formidable list of the principal's responsibilities. It requires new roles and new forms of leadership carried out under careful public scrutiny while simultaneously trying to keep day-to-day management on an even keel. (Lashway, 2002, p. 13)

In this era of heightened accountability, principals not only need to respond to accountability requirements, but they must also be accountable to their own job responsibilities. Today's administrator must fulfill the role of instructional leader while relying on managerial skills

including delegation and collaboration. Of particular interest is the role of the elementary principal, who typically has fewer administrative staff and personnel than his or her middle- or high-school counterparts, and is, in many instances, the only administrator in the building. Therefore, this study was designed to examine specifically the ways in which elementary principals understand their jobs and their leadership practices.

Using the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008) as a framework, this research explored the relationship between the standards and the ways acting elementary principals described their work. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) asserted that the standards are a catalyst for new thinking about the role of principal as a leader and manager. Further, the standards provide the educational framework to prepare competent and successful school leaders more effectively and to chart a path for school leaders to assist them in improving student success (Lovely, 2004).

The ISLLC standards are comprised of six function areas that describe and define strong leadership: (a) setting a shared vision of learning; (b) developing a school culture and instructional program that supports student learning and staff professional growth; (c) ensuring effective organizational management, which includes resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; (d) collaborating with members of the faculty and community, responding to the diverse interests and needs of the community, and securing community resources; (e) acting in an ethical manner with integrity and fairness; and (f) understanding, influencing, and responding to the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). The ISLLC standards have become a national model of leadership standards and serve as common language of leadership expectations.

Literature Review

Increasingly, district superintendents are holding building administrators accountable for student achievement. According to Kaplan (2005), 63% of superintendents noted that they evaluate the principal on his or her success in raising student achievement. In addition, 73% of superintendents suggested that holding principals accountable for their students' standardized test scores is a good idea (Kaplan, 2005). The accountability demands

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associated with the No Child Left Behind legislation (2002) have resulted in an increased focus by principals on data disaggregation and enhanced teaching and learning practices. Reporting requirements and annual achievement targets require that principals publicly answer for the performance of their schools. Today's accountability paradigm requires a skillful leader who knows both instruction and management techniques.

Principals are responsible for managing complex organizations with varied challenges and unpredictable demands (Donaldson & Marnik, 1995; Ediger, 2009; Fullan, 2001; Robbins & Alvey, 2003). Principals often find it difficult to remain focused on their fundamental purpose due to the nature of their job that requires attending to multiple and varied issues and problems throughout the school day. Principals must be able to work quickly, shift gears easily, and complete tasks in a compartmentalized way throughout the day. The major difference in managers and leaders is that managers are concerned with directing and leaders are concerned with influencing (Crow, Matthews, & McCleary, 1996; Turnbull et al., 2009). "Leadership and management must coincide; leadership makes sure that the ship gets to the right place; management makes sure that the ship (crew and cargo) is well run" (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000, pp. 38-39).

Today's administrator must major in instructional leadership, learning how to complete essential management details through delegation and collaboration. Instructional leaders must be knowledgeable about learning theory, effective instruction, and curriculum (McEwan, 2003). McEwan asserted that "instructional leadership is directly related to the processes of instruction where teachers, learners, and the curriculum interact" (p. 6). There is no one better situated to reflect upon and develop solutions to the challenges and demands facing school leaders in this era of test-based accountability than principals themselves.

Good leadership requires effective management. Effective principals are also effective managers. They must be excellent communicators and use this strength to develop relationships with teachers, assistant principals, students, parents, custodians, secretaries, counselors, media specialists, bus drivers, central office personnel, and school resource officers. As the school manager, the principal must display respect for every individual who contributes to the school's success. According to Robbins and Alvy (2003), the principal must manage challenges and relationships among different constituencies: teachers, central office personnel, as well as the school community.

Setting priorities needs to be related to the overall school vision of the leader. Principals need to make distinctions about what is more important and what is less important and decide what gets done at various points in time. Oftentimes, it is difficult to prioritize in schools when everything seems equally important (Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005). Every school principal operates within the same time constraints. In a 2001 Public Agenda poll, 909 principals were surveyed about the priority that instructional leadership was given during the school day. Their responses indicated that instructional leadership efforts must be added to an already overtaxed agenda (McEwan, 2003). According to McEwan, in a similar study by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2001), 70% of the principals considered their biggest hurdle to be the lack of time in their profession. They indicated that responsibilities are continually added and yet there never seem to be requirements that are removed. Rather, layered tiers of job components must be accomplished (McEwan, 2003). Principals must think about what matters most, what makes sense to prioritize, and always consider that work in education is ongoing with constant changes and choices.

The purpose of this study was to examine leadership priorities and responsibilities from the perspective of the elementary principal and to understand how they conceptualized their role. The following research questions guided the research design:

1. How do elementary principals describe individual leadership in their schools?

2. How do the requirements of the job of elementary school principal coincide with what he or she believes should be the leadership focus?

3. What is the role of instructional leadership in elementary principals' descriptions of their work?

4. How do elementary school principals set job priorities in order to successfully lead their schools?

Methods

Given the aim of the study, the researchers employed a qualitative approach to address the research questions. Face-to-face, semistructured interviews were conducted with each of the 25 participants, which allowed for capturing rich individual perspectives. Individual interviews were conducted in the principal's school office and lasted on average 45 minutes to 1 hour. Additionally, each interview was recorded and transcribed within 48 hours. To supplement the interview data and to triangulate across data sources, each principal completed a 1-day log that detailed his or her specific activities for a particular day, and school mission statements of participating principals were collected and analyzed. A reflective log and researcher memos were used throughout the study as strategies to enhance the credibility of the findings (Maxwell, 2005).

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to identify and recruit study participants from three school divisions in Virginia. The student populations in the three divisions ranged from nearly 25,000 to 58,000 students. The demographics of the public school systems were fairly diverse and included Caucasian, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian student populations. The geographic regions of the school divisions varied in size from 674 square miles to 437 square miles and can be described as including suburban, rural, and urban areas. Potential participants were selected from a total number of 96 schools serving kindergarten through Grade 5. Schools were classified according to the size of the student population as small (0–450 students), medium (451–750), or large (751–1200). The school populations of the participating principals varied from a small-sized school of 207 to large schools of more than 1,000 students.

Of the 25 participating principals, 4 ranged in age between 30–40 years, 11 were between 41–50 years, 9 were 51–60, and 1 was over 60 years. Three of the principals had doctoral degrees in education, and 22 had attained master's degrees. In addition, three of the principals were currently enrolled in doctoral programs. Four of the participants were completing their first year as principal in their current school assignment. Three of the first-year principals had relocated from another locality (two from within the state of Virginia and one from another state), and one was promoted from within his or her current locality. The years of experience in education ranged from 9 to 34 years, and the number of years of administration experience ranged from 3 to 22 years. Twenty female and five male principals participated.

Data Collection and Analysis

To guide the interviews, the researchers developed a protocol based on the ISLLC standards and addressing the following topic areas: school leadership, job requirements and accountability, and demands of and changes to the principalship. Example questions included: What does leadership mean to you? What are your greatest strengths as a leader? What are the challenges that you face as a school leader? How do you balance instructional leadership and school management responsibilities? How do you set your job priorities?

The researchers used content-analysis methods to examine the interview data, the school mission statements, and the reflective logs maintained by the principals. According to Patton (2002), "Content analysis is qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative materials and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (p. 453). The interview protocol and ISLLC standards, as well as emergent categories from the interviews, were used to develop codes. Coding categories focused on the following areas: school leadership, ISLLC standards, instructional responsibilities, managerial responsibilities, accountability, and changes to the principalship. Descriptive codes were applied to the interview transcripts, mission statements, and logs; code frequencies as well as code combinations were used to develop and identify the emergent themes.

> *[Principals'] descriptions of leadership and leading included notions of leading by example, building relationships, creating a school vision, understanding the community, being an instructional leader and school manager, as well as being a child-centered leader.*

Findings

Several themes emerged related to the role of the principal, job requirements, aspects of instructional leadership, and setting of priorities. Each broad theme is described and illustrated using several subthemes and sample quotations that best capture the essence of the theme as well as the majority perspective.

Role of the Principal

The findings indicated that principals conceived of their role in ways that were multifaceted. Their descriptions of leadership and leading included notions of leading by example, building relationships, creating a school vision, understanding the community, being an instructional leader and school manager, as well as being a child-centered leader.

Leading by example: *Teacher of teachers.* Approximately 40% (n=10) of the participants shared that they led by example. "I feel that teachers are leaders in their own classrooms. So for me leadership is just leading them and supporting them."

Building relationships: *The nurturer.* A common thread that emerged from the interview responses described the importance of building and sustaining strong relationships. Forty-eight percent (n=12) of the administrators believed that their strength was in the area of interpersonal skills. Approximately 32% (n=8) of the participants discussed the importance of building relationships. Sixty percent (n=15) of the principals thought that their faculty respected their leadership. "I build relationships with my faculty,

staff, students, and parents. I am a naturally nurturing person. So when I talk to them it is not just as a principal to a colleague–it is to someone you [sic] know, and building trust is important."

Creating a vision: *Change agent.* Creating a school vision was discussed by 20% (n=5) of the principals. "Whenever I think of leadership I think of vision. Having a vision of where you want your organization or the people to be is my strength. Then, of course, having the vision also must involve having the skills to help people get there."

Understanding the community: *PR facilitator.* Thirty-two percent (n=8) of the participants shared that leadership means understanding the community. "A lot of it has to be PR [public relations] on my part to let people know that this need exists. So everybody that I meet with, I start off talking about the needs of the school. And some great things have come from that."

Being a manager and an instructional leader: *The juggler.* Almost a majority (48%; n=12) of the school principals indicated a desire to be more of an instructional leader. The participants communicated frustrations concerning the issue of spending more time as a school manager than as an instructional leader, as suggested by 60% (n=15) of these elementary principals. Interestingly, 2 of the 25 principals described their leadership as being a dual job of both school manager and instructional leader. "I would like to be more of an instructional leader rather than feel like I am juggling 18 balls at once, which is how I feel that I am doing with management issues."

Child-centered leadership: *Kid-friendly.* Participants also discussed the importance of making child-centered decisions. This response was evident in answers to a variety of interview questions. The importance of making decisions based on the best interest of the students was important to all 25 principals. In addition, this theme was further supported by the document review of the schools' mission statements, each of which connected the school's mission to each child's success.

Essential Job Requirements

The findings detailed the variety of essential job requirements of the principal, and the influence of accountability was evident across all of the varied job responsibilities. They included instructional leadership, school management, job accountability, and knowledge of the ISLLC Standards.

Leadership focus: *Holy* time vs *tool* time. Notable patterns emerged that related to the professional job requirements and the principal's personal belief concerning his or her leadership focus. Forty-eight percent (n=12) of the school leaders thought that the leadership focus should be on instruction, yet 60% (n=15) indicated that they spent more time as a school manager. Thus, most participants indicated discord existed between the actual job responsibilities and what they believed should be their school leadership focus. Notably, however, 2 of the 25 administrators stated that they spent more time as instructional leaders. "And I have 'holy' time in which my secretary is not allowed to schedule things. I am out in classrooms or meeting with grade levels."

School accountability: *Captain of the ship.* Eighty percent (n=20) of the participants explained that they felt accountable first to the students and then to the parents and teachers. Sixty percent (n=15) shared they also were accountable to their central office and school board supervisors. Forty percent (n=10) indicated that accountability demands made them focus on being data-driven leaders. Forty-eight percent (n=12) of the principals described the effect of accountability on their leadership as framing how they made decisions and

how they prioritized their job responsibilities.

Familiarity with the ISLLC Standards: *Local compass.* Importantly, 40% (n=10) shared that they were more familiar with their county (local) standards than with the national ISLLC standards and utilized them as guidelines for their job responsibilities more than they did the national standards. Because a majority of the participants had 26 years or more of experience, they likely entered school administration before the ISLLC standards were adopted by their state. Thus, the county guidelines would be those with which the school principals were most familiar in the area of professional guidelines and requirements. Based on responses, the ISLLC standards were not a strong influence on the elementary principalship. "My county has more defined standards specific to the way we do things."

Aspects of Instructional Leadership and Setting Priorities

With regard to setting priorities, the primary emergent theme was the need to prioritize and balance the job responsibilities and workload. Overall, the principals explained that balancing their personal and professional lives equated to long work days and to working at home so they could be readily available to the students, parents, and teachers.

The role of instructional leader: *The delegator.* When discussing their roles as instructional leaders, the school administrators mentioned the issues of time management and the need to delegate job responsibilities in order to meet the demands of both instructional leadership and school management. Sixty percent (n=15) explained the importance of shared leadership. Participants highlighted the benefits of having the help of an assistant principal, as well as the importance of working as a team. Twenty percent (n=5) commented that an assistant principal would help them to better meet the demands of being an instructional leader. Participants also discussed that they wanted to know what was going on even when they delegated duties.

Job prioritizing: *Murphy's Law.* Overall, principals saw instructional leadership as being the most important job responsibility but recognized that time constraints and management demands often put instructional leadership at the bottom of the list. Principals used a variety of methods in order to prioritize their time and their job responsibilities, such as creating a daily to-do list (even though it often changed). The list of *real life* priorities included dealing with parents who showed up at school, enacting student discipline, completing classroom teacher observations, supporting teachers, placing parent phone calls, handling e-mail correspondence, and dealing with various crisis situations. These multiple priorities reinforced the importance of allocating more "human resources" to assist the principal.

Job balancing: *24/7.* Approximately one-third (32%; n=8) of the principals stated that they did not balance their workload; they tried to do it all. "I have an open door policy so I never get anything done. I have to get up at 4 in the morning to work, and I stay up late at night to work. It is a 24/7 job." Interestingly, even with so much emphasis on long work days, only two participants noted that they wished the job involved less stress.

Discussion

The findings of this study were consistent with those of the extant literature. In the area of the primary role of the principal, participants described the principal as wearing several different hats. One of the surprising outcomes of the research was the fact that only four of the participants expressed leadership strength in the area of instructional leadership.

School management was not mentioned as a strong point, yet 60% (n=15) stated that they spent more time as school managers. Two of the 25 principals described leadership as being a dual job of manager and instructional leader. These findings supported those of Lashway (2002), who asserted that

> the multiplicity of demands also creates role conflict. Surveys persistently find that principals feel torn between the instructional leadership that almost everyone agrees should be the top priority and the daily management chores that are almost impossible to ignore; often, the managerial responsibilities seem to take precedence. (p. 5)

The challenges described by the school leaders were in the area of time management and school accountability. Other areas that were noted as challenges to principals were parents, disciplinary issues, special education, and e-mail volume.

In a standards-oriented age of accountability, it is not surprising that 48% (n=12) of the participants shared that state and federal mandates posed leadership challenges. Principals found themselves accountable to policy makers, parents, and business leaders. The political pressure of high-stakes accountability required principals to improve instruction and student achievement while balancing concurrent needs to maintain facilities, supervise student conduct, and manage budgets.

> " . . . [E]ven though principals were not overly familiar with the ISLLC standards, the ways in which they described their roles reflected the key elements expressed in the standards. "

An organization's success is often determined by the quality of its leadership (Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005; Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009). The ISLLC standards established the foundation for essential responsibilities and priorities of the role of school leaders. Yet 40% (n=10) of the participants stated they were more familiar with their county standards and utilized them as guidelines for their job responsibilities.

Interestingly, however, even though principals were not overly familiar with the ISLLC standards, the ways in which they described their roles reflected the key elements expressed in the standards. According to the Council of Chief State School Officers (2008), the purpose of ISLLC Standard 1 is to ensure that school leaders develop a shared vision. Twenty percent (n=5) of the participants stated that their work involved creating a school vision. ISLLC Standard 2 states the need to develop a school culture and instructional program. Approximately 48% (n=12) of the administrators responded that they would like to be more of an instructional leader in their school. Standard 3 outlines the importance of organizational management. "Making management decisions in such complex settings involves identifying, clarifying, and resolving competing needs, forces, and claims of all stakeholders involved" (Hessel & Holloway, 2006, p. 62). Similarly, a majority of the principals discussed the issues of spending more time as a school manager. It is noteworthy, however, that only one participant acknowledged the ability to meet the demands of both instructional leadership and school management effectively. Standard 4 states the need to collaborate with all stakeholders. Thirty-two percent (n=8) of the school leaders shared the importance of understanding the community, but only one principal discussed the importance of making

connections with the business community. Standard 5 focuses on the importance of integrity and fairness. One participant discussed the "moral compass" in his or her work as a school leader. Standard 6 describes political, social, legal, and cultural contexts of the job. Four of the principals shared the importance of service to others. Thus, the findings of the study demonstrated that the ways in which principals fulfill their responsibilities are more aligned with the standards that focus on instruction and management than with the others. This finding suggests that universities need to ensure that the ISLLC standards are a greater part of the leadership curriculum.

Implications for Practice

Several implications for practice emerged from this study. The first was in the area of *human resources*. Fifteen (60%) of the participants discussed the need to add more "human resources" to assist the principal. Regardless of their specific school size, principals communicated the need for greater administrative support in the form of assistant principals, administrative assistants, special education coordinators or administrators, bilingual interpreters, clerks, cafeteria monitors, and bus duty assistants. All of the participants who worked in schools without an assistant principal noted the importance of that human resource and regarded decreases in such assistance as one of the recent changes in the principal's job. School boards studying budgetary requests should consider the need for more administrative assistance on the elementary level.

In addition to highlighting the clear need for additional administrative staffing and resources, the study pointed to the need for principals to delegate responsibilities to others in their buildings as one way to manage multiple responsibilities effectively. This form of distributed leadership can benefit not only the principal but also instructional staff by encouraging shared responsibility and ownership among staff for the general functioning of the school. Delegating responsibilities can cultivate teacher leaders within schools and can foster the professional development and experiences of teachers who desire to remain in the classroom but are interested in increased job responsibilities.

Another implication from the study was the need to prepare and mentor aspiring school leaders. The preparation programs for school leaders should include an in-depth study of the expectations set by the ISLLC standards, as well as opportunities to work with experienced and effective practicing principals. Mentoring aspiring educational administrators is another way to help new leaders develop leadership capacity and to apply what has been learned. Evaluation is also related to preparation and mentoring. The findings pointed to the utility of a standardized principal evaluation tool. Specifically, the ISLLC standards could be used to develop an evaluation measurement that could serve a formative purpose by providing school administrators with feedback to improve their work as school leaders.

Conclusion

Due to the increasing demands on educational administrators, establishment of leadership priorities has become essential. This study investigated the job responsibilities of elementary school principals and the ways in which the school administrators prioritized the many facets of the job. The literature supported the continued escalation of job demands on the school principal. The results of the study and participants' views suggested the pressing need to build leadership capacity within schools and school districts more broadly. To meet growing demands for accountability, school leaders must learn to balance

the responsibilities of being the instructional leader and the school manager, and school districts must develop mechanisms to provide greater support to building principals. The principals who participated in the study described the multiple demands and competing responsibilities of their role; however, all recognized the profound value and rewarding nature of their work both at professional and personal levels.

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A Qualitative Investigation of the Impact of Early-Career Experience on Teachers with Alternative Certification

By Gail Swain, Lorraine Schmertzing, and Richard Schmertzing

This article is drawn from a qualitative case study of eight alternatively certified teachers. The eight participants, who volunteered for the study, were recruited from a university-based program (n=4) and a state-based program (n=4). Researchers gathered focused life histories from all participants detailing their career trajectories, their choices to become teachers, their experiences in their certification programs, and their classroom practices and attitudes. Classroom observations or videos of a participant's classroom practice provided other sources of data. This article focuses on the impact of the early-career experiences of the alternatively certified teachers on their classroom practices and attitudes. The data were analyzed inductively, and one of the strongest themes to emerge from that analysis was a strong connection between knowledge and attitudes developed in the participants' early careers and their practices and attitudes in their later careers as teachers.

The National Center for Education Information (NCEI) began tracking alternative certification efforts in 1983, when New Jersey appointed a task force to find an alternative to traditional certification that would attract liberal arts graduates (Feistritzer, 2005). According to Feistritzer, this event marked the official beginning of the alternative teacher-certification movement; prior to 1983, states considered all certification types other than traditional certification (such as emergency certification) as alternative routes. As the 1980s were filled with cries of projected teacher shortages, the race was on to create alternate routes to certification (Cornett, 1986). By 1991, 39 states reported they were implementing alternative routes to teacher certification, and by the late 1990s, program characteristics such as rigorous screening processes, field-based experiences, required coursework, mentoring, and high performance standards were common (Feistritzer, 2009). The National Center for Alternative Certification reported that by 2007 all 50 states and the District of Columbia were implementing some form of alternative certification program, resulting in more than 485 alternative-certification-program sites nationwide and more than 130 different alternative-certification routes. "Alternative routes are now part of the broad landscape of teacher education and are major players in preparing teachers, alongside college recommending programs" (Grossman & McDonald, 2008, p. 194).

With the alternatively prepared teachers moving into classrooms, researchers began

to compare the performances of two groups of teachers—alternatively prepared versus traditionally prepared (i.e., prepared in university settings)—in relation to student achievement (Constantine et al., 2009; Feistritzer & Haar, 2007), teacher attrition and retention (Gerson, 2002; Stanley & Martin, 2009), teacher placement (Bales, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2002), and teacher effectiveness (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2003). Although debates have continued about the effect of putting teachers who did not attend a traditional college preparatory teacher-training program into classrooms (Honawar, 2007), much can be learned from qualitative studies of the lives and experiences of working teachers who were certified through alternative-preparation programs.

Research Project

In this qualitative case study (Stake, 1995), the researchers investigated multiple facets of the triumphs and tribulations of eight alternatively prepared teachers. Four of these teachers were from a university-based alternative-preparation program, and the other four were from a state-administered alternative-preparation program. Both programs had similar requirements for entry and exit, such as a cohort structure, the use of mentors, and teaching in schools while simultaneously enrolled in the program. Between entry and exit, however, each participant had a unique and information-rich story to tell. To uncover these stories, analyze across the cases, and find themes in the experiences of the teachers, data collection and analysis occurred in a cyclical fashion whereby data were gathered and reviewed, tentative themes were identified, and additional relevant data were gathered (Maxwell, 2005). A brief explanation of the research methodology, description of participants, and data discussion follows in order to provide the reader with the context needed to evaluate the work (Merriam, 2002).

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Methodology

Focus groups (Morgan, 1993), individual interviews (Seidman, 2006), classroom observations (Patton, 2002), and researcher memos (Charmaz, 2006) were used to gather data to investigate the ways in which the life experiences of alternatively certified teachers influenced their role and strategies as classroom teachers. The researchers employed *mapping the territory* interviewing, which does not use a set protocol or list of questions but rather is open in structure and allows participants to steer the conversations. Focus-group interviews were used to gather preliminary

data, obtain a variety of perspectives that would inform the direction of individual interviews, and observe the dynamics of interaction among participants who trained in the same programs. The researchers conducted two focus groups with four teachers in each: one with teachers participating in the university-based alternative-certification program, the other with teachers from the state-administered program. At least two individual interviews were conducted with each of the eight teachers. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed in a search for emergent themes. "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, p. 9); consequently, passages taken directly from the transcriptions are included in the upcoming data discussion. Observations of the participants in their work settings (classrooms) and analysis of documents (such as e-mails and classroom observations conducted by school personnel) facilitated triangulation of data related to the attitudes, behaviors, and experiences of the teachers. Modified grounded theory was used to identify core themes that were inductively generated from analysis of the fieldwork data (Charmaz, 2006; Patton, 2002).

Participants

Participants were recruited by the program directors, who asked for volunteers. Four students from the university-based program and four students from the state-administered program were included in the study. The research project began when the participants were in the second year of their alternative-certification programs. Their teaching experience ranged from 2 to 4 years. Of the four teachers who were trained in the university-based alternative program, three were Black males, including one originally from Africa; the fourth member of the group was a White female; all were middle school teachers in districts from the southern part of a Bible-belt state. Three of the teachers were earning their Master of Education degrees through the university program, while the participant originally from Africa had previously earned a doctorate in instructional systems design.

The four teachers from the state-administered training program were all female and from the midsection of the state. Two of them taught elementary students, the one Black participant taught middle school, and the fourth taught high school. Although two of the teachers were currently teaching elementary students, their certifications were in Special Education for kindergarten through Grade 12. Two of the teachers had master's degrees, and the other two had bachelor's degrees in their related content areas. The diversity of these participants is similar to that found in other alternative certification programs throughout the country (NCEI, n.d.) and added range to our findings.

This study, as is the case for most qualitative studies, had the limitation of a small sample size. It was not our purpose, however, to make broad generalizations about teachers who attend alternative-certification programs. Our intention, rather, was to conduct an in-depth investigation of a limited number of participants to understand how their life experiences informed and shaped their teaching practice. Data were analyzed within and across groups, and the theme of preteaching-career influences on teaching was strong across all participants.

Discussion and Presentation of Data

James Strong (2007), in his classic text, *Qualities of Effective Teachers*, devoted an early chapter of the book to the importance of *The Teacher as a Person*. There he set forth studies that suggested "the teacher's affective characteristics, or social and emotional behaviors,

more than [italics added] pedagogical practice" (p. 22) impact classroom climate and student achievement. Whether studies are definitive on the *more than* component of the above claim is not as important as the idea that "characteristics such as love of children, love of work, and positive relationships" (p. 22) contribute to making educators effective. One could argue that such characteristics are at least partially found in teachers *before* they enter the classroom. The upcoming introductions to and commentary on the eight alternatively prepared educators who participated in this case study are intended to demonstrate the significance of carrying *life-before-teaching* into the classroom.

Diplomacy. Robert, Patricia, and Daniel were participants in the focus group of university-trained participants. Each clearly expressed ways that preteaching careers in the business world influenced his or her teaching. Robert was the epitome of a young professional with his wire-framed glasses, buttoned-down dress shirt, and striped tie. Robert's previous career as a hotelier and his college job in parking and transportation helped to prepare him for the classroom. Focus group members laughed when Robert described his experiences of being yelled at by students and customers alike while working in the college. More seriously he explained,

> You have to take it and then give them a calm response back that will both solve the problem and at the same time calm them down. That was the best training ever, because I rarely get riled up at students' comments or remarks. I just take it in and then just give a response that calms down the situation. Having that diverse background gives me a good advantage over someone who went straight through high school, straight through a college instruction environment, and straight through student teaching right to the classroom.

Patricia, a bubbly, energetic brunette who possesses a love of history and became a teacher in order to share that love with her students, agreed with Robert: "Well, I worked retail for years, and I agree. If you're good with customer service, it sure does help you." Daniel, who came to education after a very successful career in the business world, added,

> It helps with the parents, too. [It is similar to handling] a lot of returns, after-Christmas returns, long lines, and you just have to be able to keep that poker face when they're really emotional. And think about it. If you're a teacher and you have a middle school or high school student who's getting irate or belligerent and you maintain your calm about the situation, it makes it very difficult for the situation to continue to escalate.

Patricia added,

> I notice that a lot of my friends who have only taught, it's like a battle between them and the students. I just try to go in and just be real diplomatic about it; and it's easy for me because I've dealt with irate customers, and it's interesting.

Daniel concluded the discussion, "I represent the school just like I represented my business."

Compassion and caring. Just as Daniel drew on his preteaching experiences from business, Melinda and Rebecca, participants who were trained by the state-administered program, recognized how their teaching careers were enhanced by the caring nature and respect for others that they developed during their preteaching experiences. A career in mental health paved the way for Melinda to transition into special education. Looking much younger than her 31 years, she explained,

> I did a lot of work with children working in mental health, and in working with special education I can relate, especially at the high school, because I saw a lot of teenagers. Many of the things that I see and hear in my job, I saw and heard before.

> We always had strange stories. We always had crazy things happening, and we had people who would hallucinate. We had one little guy who would just carry on conversations with whomever. Lord only knows who they were, but he would carry on full conversations with people. I mean you are around that all day long.

Melinda's prior work-related experiences provided a useful springboard for building relationships with her students. "I have a lot of patience," Melinda commented. "Sometimes I have too much patience with them. I don't let things that they do get under my skin." Rebecca's previous experiences set her up with that same type of admiration, concern, respect, and desire to connect personally with her students. She was a quiet-spoken young woman who channeled the compassion that drove her while performing cataract surgery in a pop-up trailer in China, working with AIDS patients in Uganda, and sharing her faith in the Philippines into her work teaching first through fifth grade students with mild intellectual disabilities. When she talked about her students, her face positively glowed.

> " *[These] introductions to and commentary on the eight alternatively prepared educators who participated in this case study are intended to demonstrate the significance of carrying life-before-teaching into the classroom.* "

> We had field day today. I had one [student] who is autistic and keeps the entire school rolling. We have to go up every day and visit everyone in the office. The teacher he has for homeroom was never comfortable with special education, but he [her autistic student] is just so out there. No matter how uncomfortable he is, he's going to get in there and talk to her [the teacher] and get right up on her. He's really opened up some of their eyes.

Rebecca and some of her other students have helped to bridge the gap between regular education and special education. She continued,

> I have one [student] in a power wheelchair with very good communication skills so all the kids from Pre-K to fifth grade have to stop and talk to him and slap his hand as they go by. It's been nice. We work with general education where we have several of the general education classes come down and read to my students. So when my kids are out they have different people to talk to and our class doesn't seem to [be so different]. The kids get thrilled to hang out with the regular education students and to feel normal for a bit.

It was obvious that Rebecca loves what she does and that she loves her students. Alongside the caring and nurturing traits these two teachers developed before they moved into the school environment, they and other alternatively prepared teachers we spoke with also exhibited respect for their students.

Structure. Andrew grew up in Liberia with an "excellent education system" that blended African and American cultures. He arrived in the United States after fleeing Liberia, which experienced a military coup during his senior year in college. Once in the states, he worked in curriculum and instruction with state government for 17 years. Andrew spoke of his

preclassroom profession.

> In state government, I did a lot of test development and measurement. One of the jobs I really liked was in the Department of Children and Families. They were working on one [a testing division] to use a state-wide education exam for job protection officers. I had to design a program to test and certify 3,000 workers within 12 months, so that it would be in time for the legislative session so the salaries would increase. … It was an opportunity that a lot of professionals never get in their lifetimes—to go into an area where there is nothing and the boss tells you, "I don't know what to do. You're the expert. You build everything from scratch." And that's what I did.

As downsizing was occurring in government jobs, Andrew decided to change careers and took a job in the public school system, where he was able to transfer his design and development skills to build a remedial program for middle-grade math students. In Andrew's class he emphasized the importance of respect for all, an especially important lesson for the 107 students he saw each day. Andrew explained,

> All of them might be doing different things. Every class has about 15 to 20 students. I am constantly on the move, helping each student do different problems, working with them, evaluating them, and looking at their lessons. I model what I want. I model what I expect from [my students] and tell them what the consequences are. I let them know that I respect them and I expect to be respected; and I expect them to respect their fellow students. So I go through my rules and procedures and then they test me to see how far they can go. I let them know where I draw the line, that we can have a fun class, have fun learning, and treat everybody equally.

Andrew described patience, mutual respect, and fair treatment of students as major strengths in his teaching and noted that all of these strengths were required to be successful during his preteaching career.

> " *Our research clearly indicated that teachers who had previously been out in the business world, military organizations, or other nonschool-based environments and who brought the lessons learned there into their classrooms were aware of the positive impact on their students.* "

Other lessons. Whether the precertification years were spent developing positive personal characteristics or practicing trade skills of a professional nature, each participant recognized the significance of his or her experiences prior to entering the classroom. Caroline's years in office management at a real estate firm and her degree in psychology helped her prepare for her current role as an elementary school teacher. She explained, "I was like an administrative assistant in many levels at the office, so in dealing with the agents I had to help them with tasks like keeping up with their credential hours and that type of thing." Multitasking in the business world helped develop her belief that she can "do anything about 101 different ways," which may be why her strengths in teaching were evident in differentiation, reteaching lessons, and extending the lessons. Jordan's job as an administrative assistant taught her the importance of a professional dress code and gave her the secret

weapon she needed to survive her early teaching experiences with middle-school students. She remarked, "At my school most of the kids are taller than me[sic]. I have to do a lot to distinguish myself. Dress code is a big deal for me." Transferring the professionalism she saw while working in the university president's office to her teaching environment enabled Jordan to establish herself as the authority figure in her classroom. In reference to the path to teaching, Rebecca commented, "It all seemed so haphazard, but it's been interesting to see how it's come together." For the educational researcher it may be more than interesting; it may be a path that, if researched more thoroughly, could provide valuable information for those who are, work with, or hire the alternatively prepared teacher.

Conclusion

One overarching theme emerged consistently throughout the research: life experiences shaped the persona of and defined the character of the participants in their roles as classroom teachers. Although life experiences have a direct impact on all teachers, the career and work experiences of the alternatively prepared teachers in this study had an additional impact on their roles as teachers and informed their approaches to students and their instructional practices. Our research clearly indicated that teachers who had previously been out in the business world, military organizations, or other nonschool-based environments and who brought the lessons learned there into their classrooms were aware of the positive impact on their students. Robert, Patricia, and Daniel demonstrated how the business world influenced diplomacy in the classroom. Melinda and Rebecca developed an understanding of people prior to their teaching careers that produced compassion and a caring nature that guided them in building relationships with students. Caroline, Andrew, and Jordan applied ideas of structure, discipline, professionalism, and respect for others from their previous employment to classrooms where they provided a context for students that increased their academic performance. Robert recognized his preteaching career as an asset when he remarked, "I think that having that different background is something that I can add to the classroom each day and give the kids a new view instead of just coming straight from college."

> *". . . [A]n administrator who is tasked with hiring should recognize that how a teacher achieved the license to teach may be less important than how the teacher articulates connections between previous experiences and the world of the classroom."*

Hearing the stories and seeing the practices of these eight alternatively prepared teachers led us to conclude that the value of preteaching experiences can be substantial in the classroom. Further, an administrator who is tasked with hiring should recognize that how a teacher achieved the license to teach may be less important than how the teacher articulates connections between previous experiences and the world of the classroom. Teachers in neighboring classrooms should encourage alternatively certified teachers to share stories about life experiences before certification. Such stories could provide the basis for conversations among traditionally trained teachers and alternatively trained teachers that might build relationships and smooth the transition to the teaching profession for both groups. Further research is needed to identify the value of those experiences and

to establish more clearly how worldly, work-related activities translate into good school practice. A deeper understanding of which work experiences have a positive impact on teaching might be useful as a screening mechanism for selecting candidates for alternative teacher-training programs. Not all alternatively certified teachers make it, and the more educators understand about those who makes the best candidates and the process by which they adapt to the classroom, the better able they will be to select the best candidates and facilitate successful transition to their careers in education.

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Reflections

To Teach
By Cheryl Cartrette
Omega Chapter, North Carolina

Because there is a young frown wanting my smile
A tiny shiver needing my warmth
An unspeakable fear craving my protection
An aching hurt requiring my care
A nagging question desiring my answer
A striking difference longing for my acceptance
A needling doubt seeking encouragement
A hidden talent beckoning my notice
An untapped potential awaiting my nudge
A green dream looking for my inspiration
An unrealized greatness searching for my nourishment—
An expectant life dreaming for success

Because there is a tender soul yearning to burst forth in bloom
From wide-eyed imaginings to golden accomplishments–
I open my books, mind, and heart
To teach.

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Submissions from members will be accepted for review provided that:

* The submission is not being considered concurrently in whole or substantial part by another publisher.
* The *Bulletin* has exclusive option of possible publication for a period of 6 months following receipt of the submission.
* The author assumes responsibility for publication clearance in the event the submission was presented at a professional meeting or is the direct product of a project financed by a funding agency.
* Authors are responsible for accurately citing all quoted and bibliographic materials and for obtaining permission from the original source for quotations in excess of 150 words or for tables or figures reproduced from published works.
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Manuscript Preparation

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* Use *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, current edition, for manuscript preparation. Visit the APA Style Web site at www.apastyle.org.
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* References should refer only to materials cited within the text. Nonretrievable material, such as papers, reports of limited circulation, unpublished works, and personal communications, should be restricted to works absolutely essential to the manuscript.
* Abbreviations should be explained at their first appearance in the text. Educational jargon (e.g., preservice, K–10, etc.) should be defined as it occurs in the text.
* Place tables and figures on separate pages at the end of the manuscript. Use Arabic numerals and indicate approximate placement in the text.
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Submission Type and Description	Word Length	Abstract or Introduction	Documentation
Action Research: Organized, systematic, and reflective observation of classroom practice that also addresses areas of concern.	1,500-4,000	Abstract	Required
Qualitative Research: Focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meanings from their experiences; essentially narrative-oriented and employs nonstatistical approaches.	1,500-4,000	Abstract	Required
Quantitative Research: Involves the measurement of quantity or amount in order to test a hypothesis or a theory; gathers and analyzes measurable data in order to support or refute a hypothesis or theory. Numbers and statistics are central to quantitative research.	1,500-4,000	Abstract	Required
Annotated Bibliography: An alphabetical listing of sources that provides an account of research that has been done on a given topic; includes a concise summary of each source as well as some assessment of its value.	1,500-3,000	Introduction	Required
Position Paper: Defines an issue; asserts clear and unequivocal position on that issue and argues directly in its favor.	1,000-1,500	Abstract	Required
Program Description: Provides an overview and details of a single program in an educational setting. Goals, resources, and outcomes are included. No marketing or promotion of a program is allowed.	1,000-1,500	Abstract	Encouraged
Book Review: Combines summary and personal critique of a book on an educational topic or with educational relevance.	400-700	Introduction	Required
Graphic Arts: Original drawings, sketches, etchings, woodcuts, photographs, cartoons	NA	NA	Not required
Letter to the Editor: Responds to materials previously published in the *Bulletin*; must include author's name and chapter/state of membership.	200-300	NA	Not required
Poetry: Original expression in any brief poetic format.	NA	NA	Not required

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