The Border Walking Journal

Borderlands Center for Educational Studies (BoCES)

New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, NM
2010
THE BORDER WALKING JOURNAL HAS EVOLVED FROM A CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS PERIODICAL TO A MORE FORMAL COMMUNITY OF AUTHORS DESIRING TO ADDRESS EDUCATIONAL ISSUES OF THE BORDERLANDS. THE RANGE OF CONTRIBUTORS AND TOPICS IS WIDE, CROSSING ETHNIC, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL BORDERS. IMPORTANTLY, THIS JURIED VOLUME ALSO CROSSES DISCIPLINE BORDERS PROVIDING THEORY AND RESEARCH WHICH HAVE THE POTENTIAL OF A MORE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSE TO ALL LEARNERS.

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DEBORAH RHEIN, PH.D., CCC-SLP & MARLENE B. SALAS-PROVANCE, PH.D., CCC-SLP
USING CULTURAL VALUES TO PROMOTE RESILIENCE IN THE SUCCESS OF LATINO SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN: A GUIDE FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

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ABSTRACT

All too often statistics related to the success of Latino students paint a bleak picture with abysmal outlooks for outcomes such as graduation rates and overall academic performance. Yet one area that can be utilized is that of resilience; which offers a pathway to capitalize on student strength. Furthermore, Latina/o students may have cultural values that not only parallel the protective factors typically associated with the traditional view of resilience, but that can be utilized to enhance student strength. It is vital for school counselors to be aware of such factors in an effort to maximize potential and ensure success for all students.

Youth often encounter risk factors such as violence exposure, family conflict, and poverty which can all impact their ability to successfully function in a school setting. In particular, minority groups, such as Latina/o, are considered to be especially vulnerable. Latina/o comprise a large and diverse group of individuals and cover a range of national and ethnic origins (Clauss-Ehlers & López Levi, 2002). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), Latina/o is a group comprised of individuals who classify themselves as Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, or Puerto Rican, Spanish, or Spanish American. Furthermore, Latinos include national subgroups with different histories, typically a common language and cultural values are shared (Clauss-Ehlers & López Levi, 2002).

Although each of these groups may have unique characteristics, as a whole Latina/o students are faced with unique challenges. In fact, the national high school dropout rates for Latina/os are projected to be as high as 22% nationally (Planty & Kridl, 2008). About one third of Latino youth are living in poverty in the United States (Shetgiri, Kataoka, Ryan, Miller-Askew, Chung, & Schuster, 2009). Correlates among persons living in poverty with poor educational and health outcomes have been widely substantiated (Shetgiri et.al., 2009; Holleran & Waller, 2003; Vega & Gil, 1999).

Despite this bleak outlook, much can be done to promote the development of resilience in Latina/o school-aged children. Particularly if attention is given to already existing cultural values that can be utilized to enhance the development of school-aged children. It has been demonstrated that a variety of cultural factors may provide powerful sources of resilience (Vásquez, 2010). Furthermore, according to Hayes-Bautista (1992), minorities, such as Latina/os, exhibit a strong belief in marriage and family, a strong work ethic, and a desire for education; all of which offer a basis for resilience.

Resilience-The Traditional Perspective

Historically, since World War II, the field of psychology has become largely a science about healing and has concentrated on repairing damage within a disease model of human functioning. This almost exclusive attention to pathology has led to a shift away from a solely pathologic view. The aim of this “Positive Psychology” movement has been “to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5).
Born out of the Positive Psychology movement has been an increasing amount of research and practitioner-based literature relating to the concept of resilience. Resilience was initially discussed in terms of positive outcomes and healthy personality characteristics among children exposed to unfavorable or aversive life circumstances (Garmezy, 1991; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1999; Werner, 1995). More recent research has expanded this early view of resilience to encompass the full life cycle and assert it as a basic human strength and resource. Bonanno (2004) articulated this expansion in stating:

Resilience is different than recovery… recovery connotes a trajectory in which normal functioning temporarily gives way to threshold or subthreshold psychopathology…. By contrast, resilience reflects the ability to maintain a stable equilibrium…. Resilient individuals may experience transient perturbations in normal functioning (e.g., several weeks of sporadic preoccupation or restless sleep) but generally exhibit a stable trajectory of healthy functioning across time, as well as the capacity for generative experiences and positive emotions. (pp. 20-21)

Researchers have documented that resilient individuals are more likely to have higher levels of confidence and esteem which contributes to a healthier decision making process during times of adversity (Brown & Lent, 2000; Calvert, 2002). When faced with a stressful or life-threatening event, a resilient person can maintain a more efficient and effective level of functioning, whereas a less resilient person might feel overwhelmed by their negative experience making it difficult to function (Masten, 2001; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Resilience has often been underestimated and misunderstood by many as a rarity occurring solely in exceptional persons who have experienced significant psychological problems (Bonanno, 2004). It has been suggested in the literature that resilience is more common than not and that all persons are capable of utilizing that which they possess for optimal growth and development (Masten, 2001). Clearly, resilience is a multifaceted construct that can be easily misunderstood and challenging to operationally define. Despite the complexity, greater clarity has been attempted and identified in the literature.

After summarizing the research, it was suggested by Papalia, Olds, and Feldman (2001), Dumont and Provost (1999), and Luthar and Zigler (1992) that underlying components of resilience fall into certain categories called protective factors. These protective factors are assets that persons use to maintain their equilibrium while overcoming, adapting to, or reducing the impact of stressors with which they are faced. The term “protective” is not intended to connote a barrier that will shield individuals from life circumstances; rather it implies that persons with high levels of protective factors are less affected or even unaffected when dealing with various situations. Whereas, individuals who are lower in utilizing the protective factors are more likely to experience a situation intensely, thus decreasing their ability to functionally deal with a stressful situation (Luthar, 1991). Furthermore, these protective factors can be learned or encouraged across the lifespan (Elder, 1974).

The traditional focus of resilience has led to a deficit in the professional literature regarding resilience mechanisms found in minority cultures, especially as related to Latina/o Americans. Yet, minority cultures comprise a larger segment of the U.S. demographics with Latina/o Americans accounting for 15 percent of the total U.S. Population (U.S Census Bureau, 2000). Additional estimates project that the Latina/o American population will comprise 24 percent of the total U.S. population by the year 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Since examination of resilience within diverse ethnic populations has not been readily verified through research, it is at risk of losing credibility within the scientific community as a generalizable construct (Cicchetti & Garmezy, 1993). This is of particular concern since various cultures may value and promote resilience through culture specific variables. For example, Latina/o Americans may possess cultural mechanisms that parallel family protective factors found in the resilience literature. These include Familismo, Respeto, and Personalismo.
CULTURAL FACTORS DEFINED

Many Latino American families hold the cultural value of *Familisimo* in high regard. *Familisimo* is a value in which an emphasis on strong family relationships is placed (Vásquez, 2010). These close relationships constitute those developed across immediate and extended family members as well as close friends of the family (Marín & Triandis, 1985). It seems that the value of *Familisimo* can be correlated with the protective factor of social support found in the resilience literature. *Familisimo* has further been found to be a protective factor in reducing health hazards such as HIV infection and cancer caused by tobacco use (Delgado, 1995).

Another key value within the Latino community is *Respeto*. *Respeto* refers to having respect for others with an emphasis on setting clear boundaries and knowing one’s place of respect in hierarchical relationships (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). In Latino families, respeto acknowledges the authority of elder family members and grants ultimate decision-making power to authority figures, such as parents, elders, civic leaders, teachers, law enforcement and other government officials (Clauss-Ehlers & López Levi, 2002). Bestowing such power unto authority figures can be problematic. For example, it has been found that Latino children rely more on authority figures when it comes to decision making (Rotheram-Borus & Phinney, 1990). In addition, as part of the value of *respeto*, many Latino children are taught that it is disrespectful to question authority or make eye contact when spoken to, leading some teachers to interpret this behavior as lack of interest (Marín & Vanoss-Marín, 1991). This same cultural value may also prevent Latino parents from interacting or questioning the authority of teachers and other school staff, thereby leading teachers to interpret this as a lack of parental involvement (Sue & Sue, 1999).

Little empirical research has been conducted examining the value of *respeto* and resilience, but it has been speculated that it can promote resilience by offering positive role models and mentors (Clauss-Ehlers & López Levi, 2002).

A third key value within the Latino community is *Personalisimo*. *Personalisimo* refers to building and valuing interpersonal relationships. This concept encourages the development of warm and friendly relationships, as opposed to impersonal or overly formal relationships (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Clauss-Ehlers and López Levi (2002), suggest programs in which there is a personal touch and reach youth where they are in the community are utilizing the value of *personalisimo*. This concept has been examined in terms of access to healthcare. Clauss-Ehlers (2003) notes that, within the context of access to healthcare, “relationships that are personal in nature become critical to help families develop and maintain a usual source of care.” (pp. 270-271). This is in contrast to healthcare situations that are overly formal and in which the participants may feel that there is no genuineness from the healthcare provider. It seems likely that this would also be the case with regard to using school counseling services; if the student or the family does not believe that the school counselor has their best interests at heart, they are less likely to participate in services.

How School Counselors can enhance resilience in Latino School Aged Children

School counselors are in a unique position to utilize the aforementioned cultural values for the purpose of enhancing student strength and academic performance in school. For example, youth can have the opportunity to speak with family about challenges faced at school, with peers and in their communities by incorporating the concept of *familismo* in services (Clauss-Ehlers & López Levi, 2002). The incorporation of family involvement in the education of youth has been found to be linked with a myriad of benefits including attainment of higher grades and test scores, increased school attendance, completion of homework assignments, increased graduation rates, and more matriculation and success with higher education (Henderson & Burla, 1994). This suggests that school counselors offer more services to families and find ways to integrate the family system with the school system for the purpose of maximizing success of students. Sending newsletters home, in English and Spanish, with ideas related to helping students be successful in school is one way that families can be reached. Furthermore, offering parent workshops, in English and Spanish, that incorporate a collectivistic nature may also facilitate the integration of family and school systems.
Clauss-Ehlers & López Levi (2002) recommend moving away from traditional individual psychotherapy approaches and toward family and group therapies that emphasize prevention.

Incorporating respto into a school counseling program may mean that school counselors identify and provide role models for students. For school counselors, this can also include recruiting diverse community leaders to come in and speak to school children. In addition, it is important for school counselors to offer in-service training to teachers related to cultural values of Latina/os. Such training should not only include education related to the cultural values of Latina/os, but ways in which to effectively interact with students and their parents rather than assuming that students are uninterested in academics or that parents have no desire to participate in school activities.

Since personalismo refers to building and valuing interpersonal relationships, school counselors can draw upon their training and skills related to rapport building in order to better connect with Latina/o students and their families. This requires that school counselors get to know their students and assist their students in setting academic, career, and personal/social goals. For Latina/o students, this may mean interacting, not only with the student, but with their family to provide information related to the pathway to higher education. Many Latina/o students may be the first in their families to have the opportunity to attend an institution of higher education and their families may be wary of the process. Hence, school counselors can offer information about the process of getting into college and about the long term benefits including overall income rates once a degree has been completed. The conversations related to pursuit of higher education should begin at the elementary level and continue throughout middle and high school. Suggestions for incorporating discussions related to higher education at the elementary level include taking field trips to local colleges and universities and inviting parents along. Other activities include inviting community members who have obtained degrees from institutions of higher education into the classroom to discuss their profession and what their college experience was like. Again, these presentations should not only be directed at students, but parents should be invited to take part.

Overall, despite the dreary picture painted by statistics related to the success of Latina/o students, much can be done to ensure student success. Due to the nature of the role of school counseling, school counselors can provide the support and guidance necessary to aid in ensuring student success. If school counselors are attune with the needs as well as the strengths that students offer, particularly with regard to cultural values of Latina/o students, then they can capitalize upon those strengths.

REFERENCES


Levels of Stress Among Parents Who Have Children Diagnosed with Autism in the United States-Mexico Border Region

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Abstract

A sample of predominately Hispanic parents was recruited from the United States-Mexico border region to participate in a survey consisting of the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-Short), the Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire (NSSQ), and a demographic questionnaire. Information obtained from these assessments was used to examine relationships between ethnicity, sources of social support, socio-economic status, and levels of stress among parents who have children diagnosed with autism. Results indicated that most of the participants were experiencing clinically significant levels of parental stress. Hispanic parents reported significantly more sources of informal support and less stress due to their child’s difficult behavioral characteristics than non-Hispanic parents. Parents who reported greater sources of informal social support reported significantly lower levels of parental stress; however, sources of formal support were not related to levels of parental stress.

Developmental disabilities impact not only the children diagnosed, but their families as well. Tomanik, Harris, and Hawkins (2004) estimated that as many as two-thirds of mothers with young children who have developmental disabilities experience significant elevated levels of stress. Research has demonstrated that parents who have children with disabilities are at increased risk of experiencing high levels of stress due to caretaking responsibilities such as interacting with professionals, difficulty obtaining services, and monetary stress due to missed work (Baker-Ericzen, Brookman-Frazee, & Stahmer, 2005; Tomanik et al., 2004). Autism is defined as a pervasive developmental disorder characterized by severe and pervasive impairment in several areas of development: reciprocal and social interaction skills, communication skills, or the presence of stereotyped behavior, interests, and activities (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The documented cases of autism have increased dramatically in recent years and have prompted research examining the experiences of parents who have children with autism (Prior, 2002).

Among the many impacts autism has on families, parental stress has been discussed the most in the literature. Families of children who have autism have been found to have higher levels of stress compared to families with children who have Down syndrome or families who have children without developmental disabilities (Hutton & Caron, 2005; Sharpely & Bitsika, 2004). Hutton and Caron also found that mothers of children who have autism experience significantly higher levels of stress in parenting tasks than others and experience high levels of emotional stress, anxiety, fear, and guilt. Difficulty in obtaining accurate diagnoses, and the difficulties experienced with the child’s development and integration into the community were reasons cited for increased parental stress. Specific characteristics of children with autism such as pervasive disruptive behaviors, verbal expressive difficulties, and cognitive inconsistencies have also been identified as sources of stress among parents of children with autism (Baker-Ericzen, et al., 2005).

The level of stress experienced by parents of children with autism may be positively or negatively impacted by the family’s socio-economic status. McKay, Pickens and Stewart (1996), found that socio-economic status accounted for 65% of the variance in total quality of interaction ratings for parents and children. They also reported a high correlation between parent’s socio-economic status (SES) and parental stress, with those from higher SES reporting lower parental stress and vice versa (McKay, et al., 1996).
The researchers suggested that living in a low socio-economic environment over a prolonged period of time can lead to anxiety, depression, and hostility which can then lead to poorer relationships with family members (McKay, et al., 1996).

According to a study conducted by Fugiura and Yamaki (1997), homes of children with a developmental disability among Latin/Hispanic and African American populations had the lowest income and biggest household in comparison with families among Anglo populations and families with children who did not have developmental disabilities. The average monthly income for a Latino/Hispanic household with children who had developmental disabilities was $1,970 with an average household size of 3.9 (Fugiura & Yamika, 1997). In addition, the use of welfare was higher among families of children with developmental disabilities, particularly among African American and Latino/Hispanic households. Among the families in this study, it was clear that minority groups with children who had developmental disabilities had the lowest income, largest households, and greater dependence on government assistance.

The cited research suggests that the stress levels among Hispanic parents of children with autism may be exacerbated by the hardships of lower SES. This is particularly troubling for families in the border region wherein 65% -77% of the population identifies as Hispanic and nearly 25% of the population is below the poverty level. It follows logically that parents of children with autism in the border region may be particularly vulnerable to parental stress, however there is little to no empirical support for this conjecture.

Social support may act as a buffer against the demands of raising a child with developmental disabilities. There are two main types of social support informal and formal. Informal social support is defined as support provided by family members such as mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and spouses, and friends. According to Boyd (2002) informal support is sought first, especially by mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder. In fact, the most important source of social support for mothers was their spouse, relatives, and other parents who had children with developmental disabilities. In addition, Dunn, Burbine, Bowers, and Tantleff-Dunn (2001) found that mothers who reported having access to informal sources of support reported lower levels of depression and anxiety.

Formal social support is defined as support from a professional setting and included medical offices, therapists, counselors, educators, and respite care providers (Boyd, 2002). Intervention programs are one type of formal support program that is intended to educate the parents of children with autism spectrum disorder on care, education, and therapy for the child (Boyd, 2002).
Respite care is another program available that can alleviate some of the stress parents experience by providing care for a child with autism spectrum disorder. Baker-Ericzen, et al. (2005) reported that intervention from formal service providers reduced parents’ level of perceived stress.

Although formal sources of social support may be helpful, obtaining proper help can be difficult because parents may have to deal with complexities of interacting with multiple agencies to meet their needs (Hutton & Caron, 2005). In addition, adequate sources of formal support may not be available in all areas and those that are available may not be culturally sensitive (Hutton & Caron, 2005; Moreno, 1995). In light of the challenges of obtaining adequate and culturally sensitive formal support services, Moreno (1995) identified the need for more formal support services and properly trained professionals to help Hispanic families of children with autism.

Research indicates that social support is a very important factor in reducing stress among parents who have children with autism. However, whether parents find formal or informal sources of social support more beneficial in reducing their stress remains unclear. In addition, most of the extant research has been conducted with predominately Anglo samples, leaving the impact of social support on Hispanic parents of children with autism essentially unknown. As the prevalence rates of autism spectrum disorder increase, so do the numbers of affected Hispanic children and the need to examine how their disorder impacts their families. Information regarding the stressors experienced by Hispanic parents of children with autism and the relationship between their stress and sources of social support is sorely needed to guide service providers in the development of effective and culturally sensitive services. The current study provided an initial step in addressing this need.

The purposes of the current study were to 1) examine the levels of parental stress experienced by parents of children with autism in the border region 2) examine the extent to which parents of children with autism in the border region report reliance on sources of formal and informal social support, and 3) examine the relationships between ethnicity, SES, sources of social support, and levels of stress among parents who have children diagnosed with autism.

**METHOD**

**Participants**
A sample of 69 parents of children diagnosed with autism participated in the current study. Parents were recruited within the border region from the El Paso Early Childhood Intervention program, the Southwest Autism Society of America, and the Ysleta Independent School District In-Home Training Program. Of the 69 participants, 51 (73.9%) identified as Hispanic; 18 (26.1%) identified as Non-Hispanic. The majority of the parents responding 55 (79.7%) were married, and 14 (20.3%) were not married. The majority of the responses obtained 62 (89.9%) were provided by the mothers of children with autism, only 7 (10.0%) of the responses were provided by the fathers of children with autism.

A separate group of 20 bilingual parents was recruited to comprise a comparison group to determine if the English versions of the assessment packets resulted in different responses than the Spanish versions.

**Procedure**
Each parent willing to participate in the current study was given a packet written either in English or Spanish. The packet contained an informed consent form (see Appendix A), a demographic questionnaire, the *Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire (NSSQ)* (Norbeck, 1981), the *Parenting Stress Index (PSI-Short Form)* (Abidin, 1995), and written instructions. Participants were asked to fill out the forms and place them back in the packet when completed. Once completed the participant returned the packet to the researcher or called the researcher to pick up the packet.

Parents in the comparison group were given the *NSSQ and PSI-Short Form* in both the English and Spanish versions. Parents were asked to complete both versions of each form and return them to the researcher upon completion.

**Demographic Questionnaire**
A demographic questionnaire was provided in either English or Spanish. This questionnaire was based on Moreno’s (1995) survey on Hispanic parents of children who have autism spectrum disorder.
Socio-Economic status was determined by annual household income and number of people in the household. Ethnicity was determined by asking participants to identify themselves as Anglo, Hispanic, or Other.

Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire (NSSQ)
Data concerning social support was obtained from the NSSQ (Norbeck, Lindsey, & Carrieri 1981). The NSSQ instructs respondents to list up to 24 significant persons and/or organizations from which they receive social support. For each person or organization listed, respondents are asked eight 5-point, Likert-type items. The items distinguish the amount of support provided by each person listed and the extent to which respondents are satisfied with the support provided by each person. An additional three-part question asks about supportive relationships that the respondent has recently lost. Scores of Formal Support and Informal Support can be calculated and were used in the current study. The NSSQ has been used successfully with English-speaking respondents and the Spanish version has also been used successfully with Spanish speaking respondents (Norbeck, Lindsey, & Carrieri, 1983). Evidence of adequate reliability and validity has been reported (Norbeck et al., 1981, 1983). The questionnaire takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

For the Spanish version of the NSSQ, a translation is available but is not fully validated. A panel of Spanish-speaking individuals representing seven Central and South American countries reviewed and selected wording most acceptable to Mexican speakers (Norbeck, 1995). In the current study, a group of bilingual parents of children under the age of 18 completed both the NSSQ Spanish version and English version. A paired samples t-test was performed in order to compare English and Spanish responses.

Parenting Stress Index-Short Form
Data concerning parenting stress was obtained by the (PSI) short form. The PSI short form was derived from the Parenting Stress Index and is used to assess levels of parenting stress (Abidin, 1995). The PSI has been validated in trans-cultural research involving Latin American Hispanic populations, in which the authors suggested that the “PSI is a robust diagnostic measure that maintains its validity with diverse non-English speaking cultures.” (Abidin, 1995, p.3). The PSI short form consists of three subscales: Parental Distress, Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction, and Difficult Child. Each subscale consists of 12 items and uses a Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). These subscale scores range from 12 to 60. There is also a Total Stress score that ranges from 36 to 180. High scores on the subscales and Total Stress score indicate higher stress levels (Abidin, 1995). The Parental Distress (PD) subscale measures impaired sense of competence in parenting role, lack of social support, depression, and conflict with child’s other parent. The Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (P-CDI) subscale measures the parent’s perception that the child does not meet parent’s expectations, and the interactions with the child that do not reinforce parenting role. The Difficult Child (DC) subscale measures the extent to which the child’s behavioral characteristics make them easy or difficult to manage. A Defensive Responding score can also be computed on PSI-short form. The Defensive Response score assesses the extent to which the participant approaches the questionnaire with a strong bias in order to present the most favorable impression or minimize problems or stress in the parent-child relationship. Support of the reliability and validity of the PSI has been reported in previous research (Abidin, 1995). Abidin reported a correlation of .94 between the PSI and the PSI-Short Form. The PSI-Short Form is copyrighted and may be obtained through Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.

The PSI Spanish version was developed in order to use with Spanish-speaking populations (Lucia-Solis & Abidin, 1991). Reliability coefficients for Total Stress, Child Domain, and Parent Domain for the Hispanic sample have been reported as .94, .88, and .92, respectively (Lucia Solís et al., 1991). For the current study, a group of bilingual parents of children under the age of 18 completed both the PSI-Short Form Spanish version and English version. English and Spanish responses for each subscale of the PSI-Short Form were compared using paired samples t-tests.
Analysis of the Data
Because the purpose of this research was to examine the relationships between ethnicity, SES, sources of social support, and levels of stress among parents who have children diagnosed with autism Pearson correlations were used. The level of significance (alpha level) was set at p < .05 for the current study.

RESULTS
Preliminary analyses
Preliminary analyses were conducted in order to determine if participants in the comparison group responded on the English and Spanish versions of the Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire and the Parenting Stress Index consistently. A series of paired samples t-test was performed to compare total scale and subscale scores on the English and Spanish versions of the Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire and the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form. No significant differences were found between scores of NSSQ-Informal Support-English Version ($M = 252.75$, $SD = 130.1$) and NSSQ-Informal Support-Spanish Version ($M = 250.1$, $SD = 129.8$), $t (19) = 1.0$, $p = .33$. Tests of difference could not be computed for scores of NSSQ-Formal Support-English Version and NSSQ-Formal Support-Spanish Version because the standard error of the difference was 0. No significant differences were found between scores of NSSQ-Total Social Support-English Version ($M = 254.1$, $SD = 132.08$) and NSSQ-Total Social Support-Spanish Version ($M = 251.50$, $SD = 131.8$), $t (19) = 1.0$, $p = .33$. There were no significant differences between scores of PSI-Total Stress-English Version ($M = 68.2$, $SD = 25.41$) and PSI-Total Stress-Spanish Version ($M = 67.5$, $SD = 25.84$), $t (19) = -1.0$, $p = .33$. No significant differences were found between scores of PSI-Defensive Response-English Version ($M = 14.15$, $SD = 6.66$) and scores of PSI-Defensive Response-Spanish Version ($M = 14.45$, $SD = 6.45$), $t (19) = -1.0$, $p = .33$. Based on the findings of no significant differences between responses on the Spanish forms and responses on the English forms, the data obtained from the Spanish and English forms were analyzed together.

Descriptive Statistics
Mean scores and standard deviations for each of the variables were calculated and are presented in Table 1. Total Stress scores on the PSI-Short Form ($M = 94.36$, $SD = 22.15$) indicate a high level of reported stress among the participants. A raw score of 90 (90th percentile) indicates clinically significant stress levels (Abidin, 1995). A mean Defensive Responding score of ($M = 17.64$, $SD = 5.96$) for the participants in the current study indicates that on average, participants were responding in an open and non-defensive manner (Abidin (1995)). Ratings of Socio-Economic Status ($M = 6.42$, $SD = 2.2$) indicate that participating parents reported having moderate levels of income. Scores of Informal Support ($M = 214.94$, $SD = 110.25$) and scores of Formal Support ($M = 23.69$, $SD = 36.34$) indicate that the parents in the current study obtained support from many informal sources, but reported receiving little to no support from formal sources. The majority 38 (55.1%) of participants reported no source of formal support, 3 (4.3%) reported having only one source of formal support, 42% reported having three or more sources of formal support. Total Support scores ($M = 238.54$, $SD = 116.66$) indicate that respondents obtained high levels of social support, although informal sources of support account for most of the Total Support received.

Correlational Analyses
Pearson Correlations were computed among scale scores on the PSI-Short Form, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and ratings on the NSSQ. Pearson correlations are presented in Table 2. A positive correlation was found between scores of Defensive Responding and Total Stress ($r = .73$, $p < .01$). A negative correlation was found between scores of Total Stress and Informal Support ($r = -.25$, $p < .05$). Scores of Informal Support were significantly correlated with respondent ethnicity ($r = .25$, $p < .05$); Hispanic respondents reported higher sources of informal support than non-Hispanic respondents. Respondent ethnicity and scores on Difficult Child (DC) on the PSI were significantly correlated ($r = -.29$, $p < .05$); Hispanic parents reported less stress as a result of their child’s difficult behavioral characteristics than non-Hispanic parents. Scores of informal support were negatively correlated with scores on the Parental Distress (PD) subscale of the PSI-short form ($r = -.27$, $p < .05$); parents who reported greater sources of informal support reported lower parental distress (they were less apt to feel an impaired sense of competence in the parenting role, depression, and conflict with the child’s other parent).
Parents who reported greater sources of informal support also reported less stress as a result of their child’s difficult behavioral characteristics ($r = -.31$, $p = .01$). A strong, significant, positive correlation was found between scores of Defensive Responding and Total Stress; the less defensive people were in their responding, the more stress they indicated having.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the current study support previous research indicating that parents of children with developmental disabilities such as autism experience high levels of stress, and that parents can benefit from sources of informal support (Boyd, 2002; Hutton & Caron, 2005; Tomanik et al., 2004). Parents in the current study reported experiencing clinically significant levels of stress. Participating parents, 90% of whom were mothers, obtained support from many informal sources ($M = 214.94$) as opposed to formal sources ($M = 23.69$). Parents who reported more sources of informal support reported lower levels of total stress, lower parental distress and lower stress related to their child’s disruptive behavioral characteristics.

Despite the support parents reported drawing from informal sources; the parents in the current study clearly have serious needs that are not being met through formal support services. Most of the parents (55.1%) indicated having no sources of formal support, and they did not appear to experience significant stress relief from the formal support that they did receive. A lack of available formal support services may provide a partial explanation of these findings. In fact, a recent survey of school districts in Southern New Mexico revealed a need for additional autism services in the border region (Cronin, 2009). However, in comparison to non-Hispanic parents, Hispanic parents in the current study relied more heavily on sources of informal than formal support. Moreno (1995) discussed the underutilization of mental health and formal support services among Hispanic populations and suggested that a lack of culturally sensitive services may explain this phenomenon. Additional research is necessary to determine if the differences noted across ethnic groups in the current study can be attributed to a general lack of available services, the accessibility of available services, or the lack of culturally sensitive services. Nevertheless, there is an apparent need for additional services in the United States-Mexico border region and the findings of the current study suggest that services that are sensitive to the values of Hispanic parents may also be needed.

The findings of the current study add to previous research by providing insight into the experiences of Hispanic parents of children with autism. In comparison to their non-Hispanic counterparts, Hispanic parents reported greater reliance on sources of informal support and reported less stress as a result of their child’s disruptive behavioral characteristics. These findings speak to the potential benefits of Hispanic values in coping with the demands of parenting children with autism. First, the informal support systems among Hispanic families in the current study may have been strengthened by traditional Hispanic values of the extended family and maintaining cooperation within the family. Having greater sources of informal support appeared to have helped the parents in the current study cope with the difficult behavioral characteristics often attributed to children with autism. In addition, to cope with the stressors of parenting, Hispanic parents in the current study may have drawn on a commonly held Mexican belief that one must accept one’s destiny and strive to function in harmony even in difficult situations (Stone, 2005). This worldview may have lessened parental stress levels by helping parents frame their child’s disruptive behavioral characteristics as a result of destiny rather than something that needs to be changed. The reports from the parents in the current study suggest that service providers can enhance their effectiveness by building on the strengths Hispanic parents derive from values and beliefs that are unique to their culture.

**Limitations**

Several limitations must be taken into account when examining the results of the current study. First, the small sample size ($N = 69$) may not adequately represent the population of parents with children diagnosed with autism in the El Paso area. Moreover, the socio-economic status of the parents in the current study was relatively high in comparison to that of the border region. This may not be representative of the total population in the surrounding area and families of lower socioeconomic status may experience even greater levels of stress than the parents in the current study. It is unclear whether the extremely low reports of formal sources of support are due to a lack of available services.
The uncertainty complicates conclusions regarding the types of social support Hispanic families prefer. Lastly, the majority (90%) of the participants identified themselves as mothers and this does not give an accurate representation of the levels of stress both parents experience having a child with autism. It also does not give an accurate representation of whether mothers and fathers differ in the types of social support they seek out.

**Future Research**

As mentioned above, the small sample size for this study is a limitation that may not give an accurate representation of the population of parents with children diagnosed with autism. Research regarding the types of services available in the border region and the extent to which Hispanic families perceive these services as culturally responsive may be useful in determining the need for additional services. In addition, research is needed to understand the unique coping strategies of Hispanic parents of children with autism. There is also a need to examine the influence of other variables (i.e., co-morbidty, severity of the disability, and specific characteristics associated with autism) on parental stress levels. This information will guide service providers in offering the types of services needed to help alleviate the stressors experienced by parents of children with autism. There is a need for a study that utilizes more diverse samples such as Anglo, African American, and other ethnicities, as well as male and female samples to study intergroup comparisons in order to examine stress levels among the different ethnicities and sexes. Finally, there is a great need to involve multiple formal organizations (mental health clinics, respite care, autism organizations, etc.) in order to develop a clear understanding of how formal social support affects parenting stress levels.

**REFERENCES**


Table 1.
Summary of Mean Scores on NSSQ-Formal Support, NSSQ-Informal Support, and PSI Subscales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Formal Support</th>
<th>Informal Support</th>
<th>PSI-PD</th>
<th>PSI-PCI</th>
<th>PSI-DC</th>
<th>PSI-DR</th>
<th>PSI-Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0-140</td>
<td>28-483</td>
<td>13-60</td>
<td>13-47</td>
<td>14-85</td>
<td>8-35</td>
<td>45-139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>23.59</td>
<td>214.94</td>
<td>29.57</td>
<td>29.19</td>
<td>36.49</td>
<td>17.64</td>
<td>94.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>36.33</td>
<td>110.24</td>
<td>9.90</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>11.46</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>22.15</td>
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Table 2.
Pearson Correlations among all variables

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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ethnicity</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SES</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Formal Support</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Informal Support</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>-.27*</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. PSI-PD</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.78**</td>
<td>.78**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. PSI-CDI</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.75**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. PSI-DC</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. PSI-DR</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>.73**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. PSI-Total</td>
<td>_</td>
<td></td>
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The Southern New Mexico Autism Project (SNAP) is one of the components of the New Mexico State University Special Education/Communication Disorders Autism Initiative. This project began in an effort to provide intensive evaluation, intervention, and educational services to professionals, families, and individuals with autism in the southern portion of New Mexico. Many of the rural areas in southern New Mexico had expressed difficulties in receiving much needed services and training to meet the needs of their population with autism.

In November 2008 a survey was sent to 37 school districts in southern New Mexico. The purpose of this survey was to determine approximately how many children were identified with ASD in southern New Mexico, what services were available to families through the districts/agencies, what ability the school districts had in completing multidisciplinary evaluations for children suspected of having an ASD, and what support the university might provide to the community. Of the 37 school districts surveyed, 18 (49%) were returned. Based on the information from the surveys and the Child Count Information from the New Mexico Public Education Department, it is conservatively estimated that there are approximately 300 children with ASD in southern New Mexico.

School districts indicated they were providing services for children with ASD based on the child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). These services were provided by district employees or contracted through agencies within the district’s boundaries. Typical services included academic instruction, speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychological services, behavior support, and social worker support.

Survey respondents were also asked to indicate what support services New Mexico State University (NMSU) could provide. All respondents (100%) requested training for school district/agency employees. Other supports requested were parent resource center (94%), school district consultations (83%), parent/family training and in-home behavior support/intervention (75%), multidisciplinary evaluations and intervention programs on campus (50%). Even with the low response rate, the data was useful in determining the supports provided through SNAP.

SNAP is a state-funded grant project that provides services to children with a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families and community service providers. SNAP was originally funded through Senator John Smith’s (District 35) and Representative Dona Irwin’s (District 32) special project funds (SB 165). After the first year, Senator Mary Kay Pappen (District 38) introduced HB 2 which provided recurring funds for SNAP. These funds provide for direct intervention and therapy services, training of public school personnel, classroom observations and consultations, autism screening and diagnostic services, and a lending library.
SNAP is currently staffed with a full-time coordinator, part-time graduate assistant, and support from a tenure-track faculty member in the Special Education/Communication Disorders department and a special education doctoral student.

SNAP has addressed the cultural diversity that is represented in southern New Mexico by providing services and assessments to students in their home/school environments. Direct intervention and speech and language therapy services were provided in Deming, NM in the fall of 2008 by graduate student clinicians under the supervision of a master clinical supervisor. Six students and their family received 12 hours of direct intervention. Of these original students, two were Hispanic, two were Caucasian, and two were Native Americans. Included in the speech and language therapy services, which were based on individual student needs, were social skills and pragmatic language practice, along with goals to support receptive and expressive language development. A parent training component was incorporated into the child’s therapy time. While the child was receiving speech and language therapy, parents worked with the SNAP coordinator to develop specific interventions or visual supports for use in the home. Research has shown that family training and involvement is crucial in supporting a child with autism’s skill development (McConachie & Diggle, 2007; Moes & Frea, 2002; NRC, 2001).

During the spring of 2009 four students and families received 12 hours of direct intervention and parent training in their community. An innovative aspect of therapy with this group included the use of web-based therapy sessions. The purpose for implementing this type of therapy was (1) to provide therapy for students in their natural environment, (2) to accommodate families, and (3) to eliminate the dangers of travel for both families and clinicians during dangerous weather conditions. There is empirical support for the use of technology in distance education (e.g. teleconferencing, online college courses), but it has yet to be studied in the therapy milieu.

Therapy was continued for six students during the summer. The purpose of the summer therapy groups was to support teenagers with ASD in the use of pragmatic language and social skills. Activities focused on peer-based skills during social activities. Examples included such skills as recognizing and expressing emotions, using and interpreting facial and body cues, use of turn-taking (including sharing of talking opportunities, focusing attention towards a given speaker, etc), and retelling/interpreting socially-based auditorily-presented information (e.g., the reporting of an event by a peer).

In the fall of 2009 therapy services were provided to 11 students at the Edgar R. Garrett Speech and Hearing Center on the NMSU campus. Two students received a combination of web-based and face-to-face therapy. Because of the rural nature of southern New Mexico, this has been an excellent alternative for providing therapy to families who may be inhibited by the travel requirements to obtain much needed services. It also reduces the sensory overload children with autism frequently experience when traveling long distances, especially at the end of a typical school day.

The most requested support that school districts requested was training for their teachers, support personnel, and parents. To address this need SNAP has provided, at no cost to the districts, full-day workshops on structured teaching, the use of visual supports in the home and classroom, and how to write and incorporate social stories into the child’s curriculum. Materials have been provided for participants to make visual schedules and visual tasks for use with their students. Training has been provided in Las Cruces, Deming, and Lordsburg/Silver City. Over 200 educators and parents have been trained in the two years of the project.

Southern New Mexico is a culturally diverse largely rural area. Due to the mission of NMSU as a land grant institution and the goals of this project, the SNAP coordinator divided the area into four quadrants to ensure services were being provided to all geographic regions. Quadrant One includes Otero, Eddy, and Lea counties; Quadrant Two includes Lincoln and Chaves counties; Quadrant Three includes Catron, Socorro, and Sierra counties; and Quadrant Four includes Dona Ana, Luna, Grant, and Hidalgo counties. Classroom observations and consultations have been conducted in Artesia, Roswell, Truth or Consequences, Deming, Cobre, Lordsburg, Artesia, Truth or Consequences, Hatch/Garfield, Lordsburg, and Roswell.
The SNAP Autism Diagnostic Team offers a comprehensive multidisciplinary assessment that can determine the medical/psychological diagnosis for Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder, as well as establish eligibility for school district services under IDEA 2004. The purpose for providing both statements for families with a child newly diagnosed with ASD or autism is to give parents the information needed to pursue intervention programs through community agencies and develop appropriate education programs in concert with the child’s school team, without subjecting the child to further testing. Parents are often overwhelmed when given a diagnosis of ASD or autism for their child. The SNAP Diagnostic Team process is designed to streamline the accessibility to early intervention services for their child. This is a novel approach to provide both the diagnosis and eligibility for school district services and as of this time, this team is the only team in the state to provide both diagnoses.

The multidisciplinary team includes a pediatrician, occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist, educational specialist, and school psychologist. SNAP has partnered with the School Psychology program in the College of Education at NMSU to provide assessment hours for graduate students in the School Psychology program. Supervision of these students is provided by two faculty members in that program. Assessment and intervention practice is also provided by graduate student clinicians in the Communication Disorders program with supervision of these students provided by speech-language clinical supervisors.

Referrals for assessment come from a variety of sources, including parents, pediatricians, psychologists, community agencies, and school districts. A comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation by SNAP includes developmental history/parent interview, autism diagnostic tests, cognitive evaluation, adaptive behavior evaluation, communication evaluation, sensorimotor evaluation, and assessment for education planning. Specific tests are determined based on the individual child. In accordance with best practices and the assessment criteria outlined in IDEA 2004, “a variety of assessment tools and strategies are utilized to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child, including information provided by the parent” (NMPED, 2009, p. 13).

When indicated, specific tests to determine if a child has autism or an ASD are administered by specially trained team members. These assessments may include the Autism Diagnostic Observation Scale (ADOS) (Lord, Rutter, DiLavore, & Risi, 1999), the Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R), the Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS) (Schopler, Reichler, & Renner, 1988), and/or the Gilliam Autism Rating Scale-Second Edition (GARS-2) (Gilliam, 2006).

Cognitive evaluations are performed by a psychologist or other trained professional. Cognitive instruments chosen are appropriate for the mental and chronologic age of the child and provide a full range of standard scores and current norms independent of social ability. These tests may include independent measures of verbal and nonverbal abilities, and will provide an overall index of ability. Parents complete surveys and/or interviews to assess the child’s adaptive behavior ability.

A comprehensive communication evaluation is performed by a speech–language pathologist with training and expertise in evaluating children with developmental disabilities. Comprehensive assessments of both preverbal and verbal individuals account for age, cognitive level, and socio-emotional abilities, and include assessments of receptive, expressive, and pragmatic language and in verbal individuals, a collection and analysis of spontaneous language samples.

Evaluation of sensorimotor skills by a qualified occupational therapist includes assessment of gross and fine motor skills, praxis, sensory processing abilities, unusual or stereotyped mannerisms, and the impact of these components on the individual’s life. An occupational therapy evaluation is indicated when deficits exist in functional skills or occupational performance in the areas of play or leisure, self-maintenance through activities of daily living, or productive school and work tasks. Additional assessments are performed as needed, and include measures on social skills and relationships, educational functioning, problematic behaviors, learning style, motivation and reinforcement, sensory functioning, and self-regulation.
Having an understanding of the some of the unique needs of children with autism and their families, as well as service providers in southern New Mexico, SNAP has created a lending library with resource materials, games, activities, computer programs, laptop computers, and printers. There are a variety of materials that can be used or adapted for children and adolescents with different ability levels. There are visual activities designed to support communication needs, sensory integration, reading, and social skills that are appropriate for school and/or home use. Parents, educators, and university students enrolled in courses or programs related to the special education/communication disorders field are welcome to check out any of the materials. The lending library was funded through legislative and university monies.

Southern New Mexico has a culturally diverse population which is reflected in its individuals with autism. The Center for Disease Control (2009) estimates that 1:110 children have an ASD. This disability appears to occur at equal rates in families of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Due to the rise in prevalence rates in all ethnicities, intervention programs such as SNAP are increasingly emphasizing cultural sensitivity. SNAP was created to serve the needs of the community with autism in southern New Mexico by providing services that are culturally sensitive and accessible to families in the area.

REFERENCES


The authors synthesized four qualitative studies using meta-ethnography and derived six concepts to illuminate women’s perceptions of the challenges of the public school superintendency. The superintendency involves socialization, negotiation, and determination and has particular challenges for women because of gender-role expectations. The authors suggest implications for superintendent professional development.

Abstract

The authors synthesized four qualitative studies using meta-ethnography and derived six concepts to illuminate women’s perceptions of the challenges of the public school superintendency. The superintendency involves socialization, negotiation, and determination and has particular challenges for women because of gender-role expectations. The authors suggest implications for superintendent professional development.

For some scholars, the word “border” is a metaphor. In addition to meaning a national border, it can also mean any (perhaps damaging) division between one group and another. And just as sometimes nations realize there is more to gain by opening a border than by securing it, sometimes we learn that to enhance our well being, we ought to seek ways to cross borders invite those on the other side to join us.

The border metaphor serves us well in thinking about women in the school superintendency. The majority of teachers are women but only 18% of superintendents are women (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). There is no doubt that with regard to the superintendency, a border exists between men and women. We make three points with regard to what there is to gain by opening that border: first, U.S. schools need the efforts of good superintendents, and enlarging and diversifying the pool of potential applicants can enhance our efforts to find them. Second, women have faced barriers in accessing the superintendency (Tallerico, 2000; Tallerico & Blount, 2004), and once in the superintendency, as we show below, they have faced struggles to succeed over and above those normally associated with the superintendency. Third, women superintendents may “construct and enact leadership in ways that depart distinctively from their male colleagues” (Björk, Grogan, & Johnson, 2003, p. 454). Women’s persistence in leadership activities that depart distinctively from an assumed male “norm” may expand our understanding of good leadership. All of us may learn valuable lessons about leadership by seeing women in superintendent positions. But to access those lessons, we need to increase women’s opportunities to access the superintendency and to succeed in it.

As we four writers are administrators and students of administration, we look in research for lessons for policy and practice. Our research question is this: what can we learn from synthesizing qualitative studies that has implications for superintendent leadership development, particularly for women? In seeking answers to this question, we synthesize four qualitative studies of the superintendency using methods suggested by Noblit and Hare (1988). Then, based on our study, we offer insights for lifelong development of women and other superintendents.

Method

Synthesizing qualitative studies might inform policy or practice in ways that one qualitative research study alone cannot (Doyle, 2003; Eisenhart, 1998; Noblit & Hare, 1988; Pope, Mays, & Popay, 2007; Schwandt, 1998). One way to synthesize is through meta-ethnography. Noblit and Hare (1988) explained that where a meta-analysis involves a summing of findings from studies, a meta-ethnography involves a reinterpretation of studies and therefore involves only a small number of sources.
Noblit and Hare describe the steps in a meta-ethnography to be (a) determining which of three relationships work best: the studies might support one another, refute one another, or constitute a “line of argument” (p. 82); (b) translating each study into the others; and (c) selecting one translation to guide the analysis. Translation involves “comparing the metaphors and concepts and their interactions in one account with the metaphors and concepts and their interactions in other accounts” (Noblit & Hare, p. 28). After repeated searches of the ERIC database, we selected four recent qualitative studies: Brunner (2001), Haar, Palladino, Peery, & Grady (2005), McCabe (2001) and Orr (2006). Each of us took one study and translated the other three studies into it.

We determined, after considerable discussion, to treat the four studies as constituting a line of argument. Noblit and Hare (1988) explained that a line-of-argument synthesis emphasizes “allegiance to the studies being synthesized” (p. 63) rather than to any theory selected a priori or to findings from other literature reviewed. We bring in literature we reviewed below, after we present our synthesis of the four studies.

We decided to translate the studies by Brunner (2001); McCabe (2001); and Haar, Palladino, Peery, & Grady (2005) into the concepts presented in Orr (2006). Granted, Orr was the one study of the four that did not focus solely on women. But Brunner and Grogan (2007) suggested, “As the numbers [of women in the U.S. superintendency] increase, the profile of men and women in the superintendency will become more alike in certain respects” (p. 88). We believe from our analyses that the superintendency for women is similar to the superintendency for men in terms of the challenges, approaches to dealing with them, and how to prepare for them, but that gender-role expectations and gender bias add layers of complexity onto the already complex undertaking of education leadership in a community. Orr’s concepts were helpful in understanding the superintendency in general, and ones we could apply to the increased complexity and difficulty of the superintendency for women. To Orr’s concepts, we added ones from Brunner that highlighted the challenges for women superintendents in particular. We decided to look to our synthesis to illuminate the challenges facing all superintendents, since women face those challenges as well as men, to guide consideration of how all superintendents might increase their capabilities of dealing with those challenges, and to contribute to the discussion of how professional development programs might contribute to their capability.

Findings: The Superintendency as a Negotiation between Figure and Ground

Orr’s (2006) study elaborated on a notion presented by Blumberg (1985), i.e., the superintendency as a figure/ground relationship, the figure of the superintendent and his/her aspirations to lead against the ground of community expectations. Orr presented that figure/ground relationship in terms of three concepts: socialization, negotiation, and determination. The line-of-argument we pursue, using these four studies as data, is to characterize the U.S. superintendency in general as a constant negotiation because of the superintendent’s desire for autonomy and personal effectiveness in contexts where forces counter his/her personal effectiveness. For women, as noted above, that negotiation is complicated by gender bias and gender-role expectations. From the four studies we derived six concepts (three pertinent to the ground, three to the figure, and one to leadership development).

Concept 1 (ground): knowing the district and community.

Superintendents strive to understand and work with varying expectations in their communities. One of Orr’s superintendents noted, “The environment matters—what you are coming into, whether the board wants status quo or change, or whether they need a change but still ask you to maintain the status quo” (2006, p. 1380). Many described their frustrations with aspects of the community, illustrated poignantly by McCabe’s (2001) metaphor of the superintendent “trying to light the lamp of knowledge in a community that doesn’t have any electrical wiring” (p. 700). One of Brunner’s superintendents, “Was prepared to risk losing substantial support for the sake of hearing all voices and honoring equity. . . .What drove her . . . was her belief that the students benefited from the inclusion of all perspectives” (p. 94).

But elements of the community can also offer support to the superintendent. A superintendent in Haar et al. (2005), “Good friends have been on the board” (p. 36). Brunner (2000) offered seven principles of power for women superintendents.
The first was to know the battleground. One woman told her, “I spend a lot of time . . . trying to get a sense of who the key players are . . . and how things happen in the community” (p. 167). Orr noted, “It was the relationship between the district, board, and community that they needed to learn” (p. 1380). She wrote, “A few had identified the district’s ‘sacred cows’ and figured out how to work within existing initiatives to create change and develop a more educationally supportive culture” (p. 1394). McCabe’s superintendents described themselves as “Facilitator,” a role that cannot be accomplished without knowing one’s clients. Similarly, Haar et al. (2005) told of how women superintendents developed processes for open communication and trust with the school board. Clearly, U.S. superintendents (and especially women superintendents) must develop deep understandings of the community contexts in which they are to lead education.

**Concept 2 (ground): norms of the profession.**
Socialization in norms is an essential part of learning any role. Orr’s (2006) participants described a great variety of ways superintendents could learn the insider’s view of the profession. Socialization can be seen as positive or negative. On the positive side, norms provide one with a foundation of knowledge and support amid sometimes near-chaotic situations. On the negative side, norms can be seen as inhibiting and controlling. Generally, Orr’s participants shared little about the downside of socialization.

Haar et al’s (2005) women superintendents spoke positively of how much they had learned by calling on other superintendents and their professional association. One said, “Those peer relationships with other superintendents are what pull a new superintendent through” (p. 40). But one superintendent still warned against trying to fit into a predefined definition of the role: “Don’t underestimate your value and appreciate your differences . . . Now that we are here, I think we need to be who we are and not try to do it like we’re males. We’re not” (p. 41).

Brunner (2001), described women superintendents as experiencing angst and pain. She argued, “The metaphor of the ‘warrior in battle’ is appropriate for describing women seeking success” (p. 39). She described her participants as having experienced silencing and needing to “develop the ability to remain ‘feminine’ in the ways they communicate and at the same time be heard in the masculinized culture” (p. 42, emphasis original). Brunner’s women superintendents saw the norms of the profession as detrimental to them in many ways.

**Concept 3 (ground): gender-role expectations.**
Women superintendents face particular challenges because some in the district see the superintendency as inherently a male role. McCabe (2001) emphasized seven concepts, all of which alluded to gender issues. Her first concept was, “the role of the superintendent is still perceived to be a masculine position” (p. 692). Haar et al.’s (2005) study, while being mostly positive about the women superintendents and their accomplishments, noted differences in the women’s experiences of and approaches to the role. Orr (2006) noted that her data contained references to gender discrimination as a challenge of the superintendency. Brunner (2001) recounted in dramatic and discouraging terms the challenges women superintendents faced:

Societal beliefs in their inferiority; the need to choose between relationships and careers; weak or nonexistent support systems; expectations of their provision of maternal comfort and sacrifice; and overt and covert hostility (p. xiii).

**Concept 4 (figure): having management and leadership competencies.**
There is general agreement in the literature and in these four studies that superintendents must demonstrate leadership competence in a wide range of areas: instruction, finance, law, facilities, visioning, planning, management, coalition building, human relations, public relations, understanding of diverse populations, ethics, and politics (For example, Bjork & Kowalski, 2005), though these are not discrete skills that can be mastered in isolation and then applied one at a time as needed on the job. Rather, successful navigation in every situation requires multiple competencies. As Orr (2006) wrote, “For many, the scope, pace, relentlessness of the work, and need to determine priorities was the challenge, not any specific tasks and responsibilities” (p. 1381). The women rural superintendents in Haar et al.’s (2005) study are portrayed as putting great emphasis on relationship building. Brunner (2001) wrote about risk taking by her women superintendents and noted that courage and risk taking in the superintendency are seldom addressed in textbooks or preparation programs.
So, enacting one’s own vision amid expectations to enact other people’s requires great management and leadership competency, though this is obviously more complex and requires greater dexterity and sophistication than are captured in published lists of competencies (Hyle, Ivory, & McClellan, 2010; McClellan, Hyle, & Ivory, 2010).

**Concept 5 (figure): negotiating between figure and ground.**

A necessary competency for all superintendents (and particularly for women) is to work out the tensions inherent in enacting one’s own values and vision for educational leadership in a community that may have very different (and often inconsistent) views of what the superintendent should accomplish. The superintendent’s ability to work within those tensions and to bring people together and sustain their focus on a vision is crucial for effective district leadership.

In McCabe’s (2001) study the women superintendents described themselves as musical conductors, “I listen for all the flat notes and try to know when something has to be fixed” (p. 695); priests, “to inspire—to help keep us all focusing [on] the light” (p. 697); and visionaries “a stranger in a strange land” (p. 700). But one of Haar et al.’s women superintendents said matter-of-factly, “If it’s an initiative I don’t think anybody is going to grab hold of, I don’t care how exciting it is, it’s not going to go. I just know that by myself I cannot sustain it” (p. 37). Orr (2006) contended that the “ambiguity, conflict, and overload” constituted, “the nature of the role itself, not conditions to be overcome or surmounted” (p. 1397). One of Orr’s superintendents noted confidently, I tell people it’s the best job I’ve ever had. . . . For me [it is] the sensation of orchestrating such a diverse entity of responsibilities. . . . I very much understand the issues of bringing people together, the politics, the money, the lobbying, the education, all of that. Bringing some semblance of order to that obviously gives me some sense of satisfaction. (pp. 1373-1374)

**Concept 6: the learning needed to succeed in the superintendency.**

The four studies varied greatly in how they addressed (or did not address) the important issue of superintendent development. McCabe (2001) did not address implications for development at all. Haar et al. (2005) stressed how much their women superintendents learned from calling on other superintendents, on their professional association, and on a women’s group. They also stressed how important it was to get away from the demands of the job sometimes. Brunner (2001) concentrated on her women superintendents’ personal growth amid daunting challenges, depicting this growth much as one would a mythic quest. Her depiction would leave the typical professional developer struggling to answer the question, “So, what can I do now?” Of the four articles, Orr (2006) went the farthest in offering implications for preparation and professional development. We revisit her points below.

**DISCUSSION**

To answer our research question, we combine insights from the literature reviewed here with those we gleaned from our meta-ethnographic analysis. A question that faces anyone pursuing work on women in the superintendency is how much emphasis to place on the uniqueness of their experience as women versus on the commonalities experienced by superintendents in general. This question hit home for us when we saw a reviewer’s response to an earlier version of this paper. The reviewer admitted being “annoyed” by our submission and noted, “It flies in the face of the results of research . . . that showed women who seek and serve in the superintendency have the same concerns as men.” Apparently, our work called attention to issues that this reviewer felt did not merit it. Conversely, some might fault us for soft-pedaling major issues of access and justice. For example, Skrla, Scott, and Benestante’s (2001) meta-ethnography of women in the superintendency arrived at despairing conclusions and claimed that in the male-dominated culture of educational administration, women hear the message “that they are out of place and should keep quiet” (p. 123).

Brunner (2001) highlighted that this competency needs to be especially well-developed in women superintendents because, “the women superintendents in the study had to know their surroundings well enough to survive and succeed in a world where communication was shaped and defined by men (p. 42).
who see it as a region with multiple connections running across it. We believe it is true both that almost all superintendents face similar daunting challenges and that women in the superintendency face unique and daunting tests due exclusively to their gender. We authors of this article have striven to be open to both truths. We turn therefore to issues of how to foster success in the superintendency in light both of the commonalities virtually all superintendents experience and differences the women reported. To those ends, we call on theoretical perspectives that illuminate the challenge as well as the hope of fostering success and of designing more paths to reach across this particular border.

Without discounting gender bias, we view the question of how gender bias constrains women superintendents as analogous to the larger question of how the expectations of others constrains all superintendents. Orr’s use of socialization, negotiation, and determination is apt. Socialization pushes one toward conformity. For women leaders in the world of men, perhaps expected to act both feminine and “superintendently” (i.e., the way a man would), socialization can provide helpful guidance, but also be frustrating and debilitating. Determination is critical because a leader also can change the expectations of constituents through “standard setting, enacting different behavior, and self-monitoring” (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009, p. 205). Enacting one’s vision may require one not to conform to others’ expectations, and so requires determination. Hence, unless one intends either to be blindly obeisant to the wishes of others or to bull ahead as a dictator, there will be a constant negotiation.

Finally, in considering the findings of our meta-ethnography and their implications and what we might recommend, we have drawn on three frameworks: Mezirow’s idea of transformative learning in adulthood (1991; Mezirow & Associates, 1990). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) on expertise, and Day et al. (2009) on leadership development. Based on these perspectives, we offer six lessons for development of women and other U.S. superintendents as leaders.

Lesson 1 is that important learning can grow from a “disorienting dilemma” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, p. 146). Orr (2006) documented that such challenges are inherent in the U.S. superintendency and we saw in the studies we synthesized that this is particularly true for women in the superintendency. For women superintendents, the event could be the realization of how pervasive gender bias is, and how it will affect their lives as superintendents (Brunner, 2000; Skrla, Scott & Benestante, 2001). Superintendents must realize that being disorientated does not mean they are not “‘losers,’ ‘poor managers,’ or ‘poor leaders’” (Orr, p. 1395). Superintendents can see disorientation as an opportunity for growth, and professional developers can base learning activities on that very real and pervasive phenomenon.

Lesson 2 is that disorientation does not necessarily lead to growth. Disorientation can lead to “critical reflection and reflective discourse” (Merriam et al., p. 150) but “racism, sexism, and classism may impede” those actions as well (p. 150). Both “individual biography and context” (Merriam et al., p. 149) play roles here. Whether one has acquired the self-regulatory knowledge to deal with stressors and disruptions, i.e., “knowing how to manage oneself” (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993, p. 60) in particular situations is important as well. Being in supportive relationships is also important (Merriam et al. 2007). Both preparation and development programs need to ready students for trigger events and help superintendents and aspirant superintendents turn such events to transformative learning rather than defeat.

Lesson 3 for women and other superintendents is that critical reflection is a necessary ingredient for growth. Regularly questioning one’s own view of problems to be solved is part of growth. An important aspect of this is realizing the need to step back from a situation, as one of Brunner’s superintendents said, “finding time to really think about what we do and reflect about it” (2000, p. 104). The challenge for professional developers is to enable superintendents to continue critical reflection across a lifetime of leadership work, with its complexity, conflict, and stress.

Lesson 4 is that leaders need to self-regulate. This means taking an executive leadership role in one’s own reactions and initiatives. It means working to take charge of one’s own critical (and non-critical) thinking. Self-regulation enables one to be a critical reflector when that seems appropriate and to act on one’s interpretations when that seems fit. Self-regulation means looking hard problems in the face, and working on one’s own growth when growth is itself the hard problem.
Brunner (2000) wrote that risk-taking was seldom addressed in preparation programs. Since taking risks is not always advisable, risk-taking may be more usefully subsumed under self-regulation, taking charge of one’s thinking, despite the forces of either cowardice or adrenalin.

Lesson 5 is that superintendents must have opportunities for discourse. Orr (2006) reported that her superintendents wanted to construct new definitions of their roles and “be able to negotiate that constructed meaning with others, and learn to do so with the boards and communities” (p. 1399). Brunner’s book (2000) exemplified the process of learning from discourse. Both Haar et al. (2005) and McCabe (2001) alluded to problem solving with their communities. Realization of the key role of discourse in adult learning must guide policy makers in deciding what support they can provide superintendents, especially women superintendents, for discourse with colleagues.

Finally, lesson 6 is that superintendents must seek and find ways to act on their environments. This brings us back to Orr’s concept of determination and to our meta-ethnographic concept 5: synthesizing or negotiating between figure and ground. According to Merriam et al. (2007) action can range “from making a decision about something to engaging in radical political protest” (p. 135). Most superintendents probably see themselves as involved in action all the time. But in terms of transformative learning, action now follows from the disorientation, the reflection and perhaps subsequent change in perspective, and the dialogues with others to test new perspectives. This is action that may challenge boundaries one has not confronted before. It may be radical or (more likely in the superintendency) consist of action to enact change within an organization. Our analysis has not revealed as a major theme in the four studies women superintendents taking such action in regard to transformative learning, although some of them did allude to how they had changed their perspectives or made life-changing decisions. But the notion provides fruitful material for preparation and development of U.S. superintendents in general and women in particular.

The answer to our research question is that synthesizing qualitative studies can focus one’s attention on aspects of a phenomenon. Constructing a line-of-argument from qualitative studies can guide one’s consideration of theory that relate to that line of argument. Brunner (2000) described vividly the pain stress and frustration of women superintendents, but she and Grogan (2007) also noted that for women, the superintendency could be “an uncommon road to fulfillment” (p. 2007). Effective superintendents are necessary to lead educational systems that serve their students and communities well. Lifelong professional development is needed for superintendents to grow in effectiveness. Women superintendents both contribute to that professional development (to the extent that they model thinking and behavior that enlarges the repertoire ways to lead school systems), and they need the support of professional development. Our meta-ethnography suggests directions for that professional development.

The Benefits of Crossing Borders of Gender-Specific Definitions of Leadership

What is our answer to our research question: what can we learn from synthesizing qualitative studies that has implications for U.S. superintendent leadership development, particularly for women? We make the point again that we cross borders when we see more benefits to be gained from inclusion than from exclusion. Leadership in general consists of a repertoire of thinking and behaviors, and the more capabilities a superintendent’s has in his/her repertoire, the more effective s/he will be across all situations. If men and women in general tend to have different behaviors in their repertoires, then each can learn from the other and thus lead more effectively. But, since the superintendency has historically been populated largely by men, then the odds are that any educator who worked for a superintendent worked for a male one. The women educators who become superintendents have probably been exposed to leadership behaviors that tend to be in the male repertoire. Men, on the other hand, probably have had fewer opportunities to see the behaviors a woman superintendent would prefer. In that respect, at least, men have more to learn from women superintendents than women have from men. That is the benefit to crossing this border.
REFERENCES


ANALYZING SYSTEMS FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOR DISORDERS: BRIDGING THE GAP VIA A HOME VISIT MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) present multifaceted problems for educators and outside service providers (Cook, Landrum, Tankersley, & Kauffman, 2003; Farrell, Smith, & Brownell, 1998; Fitzpatrick & Knowlton, 2007; Fitzpatrick & Knowlton, 2009). This article addresses these issues and analyzes various systems—including parental involvement—and additional factors that influence the educational and social outcomes of students with EBD. Finally, two research based recommendations are provided to bridge the gap between school and home by providing implementation guidelines Borderland school districts can employ.

The educational (Lane & Carter, 2006), social (Lane, Wehby, & Barton-Arwood, 2005), emotional (Wagner, Friend, & Bursuck, 2006), and behavioral (Mathur, 2007) outcomes of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) are astonishing (Mooney, Ryan, & Uhing, 2005). Moreover, many of these student outcomes are compounded by outside influences including a lack of parental involvement (Buttery, & Anderson, 1999), stunted emotional gains, and inadequate social and life skills (Gresham, 2005). Each of these factors is perplexing and extremely troubling for general and special educators (Langland, Lewis-Palmer, & Sugai 1998; Webber & Plotts, 2008).

Wingenfeld (2002) reported that more than 81% of students with EBD have academic difficulties and learning problems which equate to failing grades (Fleming, Haggerty, & Catalano, 2005). According to Webber and Plotts (2008) about 17% of students with EBD had “little or no academic curriculum available to them” (p. 19). The lack of academic curriculum has resulted in increased dropout rates of students with EBD which was reported at 61.2% (Reid, González, & Nordness, 2004). This statistic is higher than any other SPED classification category (Bakken, & Kortering, 1999; Bradley, Degler, Zamora, & Fitzpatrick, 2008). Sadly, prevention strategies and practices are at the earliest stages, and a lack of research exists (Gunter, Denny, & Venn, 2000). Of the 61.2% of students who have dropped out an astonishing 70% of these students are estimated to be arrested within three years of leaving school (Morrison & Cosden, 1997; Webber & Plotts, 2008).

Based on each of the concerns outlined above, research suggests that a lack of parental involvement is a determining factor which either causes or is directly related to the issues students with EBD continue to encounter within the classroom and school setting. In order to address the unique individual needs of students with EBD this article analyzes the systems and service perspective in order to gain a better understanding of how each individual system should be viewed as inseparable components of the home visit model. Finally, the authors provide research based interventions to bridge the gap between school and home and will serve as the foundation for recommendations one and two.

Environmental Influences

Students with EBD are often affected by parental status and the home environment (Mann & Gilliom, 2004) and usually come from conditions such as divorced or single-parent families (Buckley, Ryser, & Reid, 2006). These environmental influences included poverty (Bower, 2003), substance abuse (Wu, Hoven, Liu, Fuller, Fan, Musa, Wicks, Mandell, & Cook, 2008), unemployment (Hollar, 2005), and copious other issues that often impact their social and school lives (Fitzpatrick & Knowlton, 2007).
According to Webber and Plotts (2008) these students oftentimes come from lower income families and about 44% come from single parent homes. As noted above, students with EBD are more likely to have poor attendance, higher dropout rates, and higher post-secondary unemployment rates (Brown, Higgins, & Pierce, 2003; Lane, 2007). Each of these outcomes can be attributed to environmental influences. With the understanding that numerous outcomes can be attributed to environmental influences (Sylva, 2005), the following sections focus on three systems (a) parental influence, (b) the family unit, and (c) student perspective.

Systems and Service Perspective
Many educators and ancillary service providers including psychologists, social workers, medical personnel, and childcare specialists recognize the futility of treating the child while ignoring the systems within which he or she functions (Zigmond, 2006). Instead, many professionals advocate an ecological approach to treatment, which focuses on imbalances or discrepancies within each system (Reddy & Richardson, 2006). The child is seen as a part of these discrepancies, and interventions are aimed at promoting changes not only in the child but also in the individuals and factors within their environment (Locke & Fuchs, 1995; Webber & Plotts, 2008).

Foster, Qaseem, and Connor, (2004) suggested that responsibility for students should be dispersed across many systems which included (a) schools, (b) primary care, (c) juvenile justice, (d) child welfare, (e) substance abuse agencies, and (f) families. Aligning each of these systems should be viewed as an integral step in changing the academic, social, and life outcomes of students with EBD. For example, the goal of the system approach proposed by Reddy and Richardson (2006) is to reduce the discrepancy between environmental expectations for a child and the capabilities of that child to fulfill those expectations. According to Apter (1982) these programs are based on the following five assumptions:

- Each child is an inseparable part of a small social system.
- Disturbance may be viewed as a disparity between an individual’s abilities and the demands or expectations of the environment but there is a failure to match the child to the system.

Depending on the community that the student comes from, expectations are either too low or too high. More often than not, the expectations are not realistic or attainable.

- The goal of any student intervention is to replace an undesirable with a desirable behavior. Ultimately providing the student with a functional skill set to be used throughout their life.
- Improvement in any part of the system can benefit the child.
- This broader view of disturbance gives rise to three major areas for intervention:
  - Changing the child.
  - Changing the environment.
  - Changing attitudes and expectations.

Although each of these factors outlined above are important, the crucial focal point of the systems and service approach is parental involvement. The following section provides an overview of how parental influence in the formative

Parental Influence
Parental influence is the first subsystem of the family unit. According to Rossman and Rea (2005) there are three basic parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative.

- Authoritarian parents value obedience and conformity to a set of standards that are usually based on religious or political beliefs (Neal & Frick-Horbury, 2001). Authoritarian parents expect their child to rigidly adhere to these beliefs, and there is little room for individual choice or personal freedom (Paulussen-Hoogeboom, Stams, Hermanns, Peetsma, & Wittenboer, 2008).
Each of these parenting styles has been linked to subsequent behaviors in children (Achilles, Mclaughlin, & Croninger, 2007). For example, overly permissive parenting, characterized by few demands or limits, has been associated with children who are highly aggressive and possess low impulse control (Lim, Stormshak, & Dishion, 2005). Parents who use severe punishment may be more likely to produce children with higher rates of aggression and delinquency (Lieberman, Van Horn, & Ippen, 2005; Webber & Plotts, 2008). When punishment and rejection are collectively a part of a child’s life, the delinquent behaviors and aggression can be observed and are easily identified (Abrams & Segal, 1998). Conversely, when parents express acceptance, commitment, love, sensitivity and warmth towards their child/children, they are more likely to exhibit appropriate social skills and acquire higher self-esteem (Quinn & McDougal, 1998).

This subsystem is the primary foundation in which students with EBD grow and develop. The outcomes of the individuals are largely based on parenting styles. Therefore, it is important to explore how the family unit impacts the outcomes of their child/children.

**Family Unit**

State systems are heavily dependent on parental involvement in order to provide the most successful interventions (Decker 2001; Webber & Plotts, 2008). For example, educators understand that it is very difficult to modify inappropriate behaviors that are allowed to continue at home (Kapungu, Holmbeck, & Paikoff, 2006; McGillicuddy-De Lisi & De Lisi, 2007). Sadly, there is an inconsistency between school and home environments (Ruffolo, Kuhn, & Evans, 2005). Therefore student attitudes toward behavior are in a continual state of flux (Musser, Bray, & Kehle, 2001). The family unit is still a significant source of influence and control in elementary and middle school (Wedig & Nock, 2007) and changes are most easily made in these formative years (Fremont, 2003). Similarly, Webber and Plotts (2008) advocated for cooperative relationships between educators and parents. Using a formidable team approach has shown to provide consistency that helps prevent pitting the home against school and vice versa (Searcy, 1996).

Webber and Plotts (2008) also outlined three major components within the family unit that can either have a positive or negative impact on the outcomes of students with EBD. Below are the three major prongs of the family unit:

- The family, which consists of family size, socioeconomic status, single vs. two parent homes, and parent education levels.
- The educational setting, which consists of peer groups, social interaction, bullying or being bullied, and teacher and student interaction.
- The community, which consists of neighborhood dynamics, employment opportunities, resource accessibility, and recreational activities.

Each of these factors is influential in either a positive or negative way. In addition to their contractual obligations, educators are expected to work within the family unit. According to Quinn, Rutherford, and Leone (2005) the following skill sets are crucial when working with families:

- Developing heightened awareness of family needs.
- Promoting effective communication with family members.
- Establishing a safe environment within the classroom.
- Modeling socially acceptable behaviors.
Educators should possess and model each of these skill sets to promote the development of students with the necessary tools and confidence to be successful in society. It is important for educators and other service providers to recognize and understand the significance of parental influence and the family unit and how each plays a major role in the success or failure of students with EBD. It is equally important to delve into and clarify the potential mindset of students with EBD and the possibilities associated with their disability.

**Student Perspective**

Aside from the appalling outcomes outlined above, students with EBD have higher rates of (a) substance abuse (Feaster, 1996; Hallfors, Brodish, & Khattapoush, 2006), (b) suicide (Kerkhof, 1994; Jollant, Lawrence, Giampietro, Brammer, Fullana, Drapier, Courtet, & Phillips, 2008; Waserman, & McReynolds 2006), (c) eating disorders (LeCapitaine, 2000), (d) incarceration (Atkins, Bullis, & Todis, 2005; Hirschfield, 2008; Kuanliang, Sorensen, & Cunningham, 2008; Sirpal, 2002), (e) domestic violence (Taylor & Barusch, 2004), (f) unemployment (Koyangi & Gaines, 1993), and (g) gang affiliations (Finn, Fish, & Scott, 2008). Additionally, 55% of students with EBD reported suicide attempts compared to only 18% of their peers without disabilities (Webber & Plotts 2008; Wedig, & Nock, 2007). Among this cohort, adolescent girls reported more attempts of suicide than boys. Each of these factors has significant implications for the dropout rate and transition planning for students with EBD.

**Value of Home Visits**

Despite multiple methods of staying connected (e.g., phone calls and emails), communicating with parents/guardians continues to be one of the most difficult and challenging aspects of teaching (Amick, 2008). To counterbalance this, the current educational system relies primarily on parent teacher conferences (PTC) to increase parent and teacher communication. According to Winterstein (1997) PTC have always existed since the inception of public education.

Ideally PTC present numerous opportunities to build rapport and gain confidence of parents (Mann, 1996; Young & Behounek, 2008). Unfortunately many of these goals are not obtained because both parents and educator dread the meeting (Stevens & Tollafiel, 2003). For example, 40% of parents never attend school conferences and this percentage increases exponentially as students enter high school (Stevens & Tollafiel, 2003).

**An Agenda for Meeting the Instructional Needs of Students with EBD**

The following two recommendations are presented to bring about better outcomes for students with EBD by increasing family unit visits and establishing guidelines for home visits.

**Recommendation 1: Home Visit Model Implementation Guidelines.**

The vast majority of parents do not attend PTC and have minimal involvement in their child’s education (Amick, 2008). Recommendation 1 is provided as a template that can either be adopted in whole or modified to meet the unique individual needs of diverse school districts within the Borderlands that experience minimal parental involvement and poor attendance at traditional PTC. Moreover, the implementation guidelines for the proposed HVM are based on scientifically based research practices (NCLB, 2002; Shavelson, Phillips, Towne, & Feuer, 2003; Smith, 2003) and educational best practices (Gray & Madson, 2007; Tedford, 2008).

In addition to embracing diversity (Wherry, 2008) home visits enable educators to create reciprocity and mutual trust with families (Allen, 2008). Several models have been implemented over time and have consistently shown stronger bonds between school and home which have increased student success. Penner (2008) and Middleton (2008) outlined two different home visit models:

- Penner (2008) reported visiting 459 homes in three weeks and each visit focused on:
  - Meeting parents on a positive level.
  - Inviting parents to meet at school or mutual location within the community.
  - Welcoming any questions, comments, or concerns related to their child’s education.
• Middleton (2008) stated that starting two weeks before the beginning of the academic school year all 2,800 students within his school district receive a home visit by their educator.
  o Elementary teachers visited students on their homeroom roster.
  o Educators documented the effectiveness of each visit.
  o To ease the financial demands, each educator was provided a $125 gas stipend.

The second recommendation focuses on the steps school districts can take to implement and sustain a relevant HVM within the Borderlands.

**Recommendation 2: Shift from PTC to HVM.** Table 1 contains three current models of PTC schedules utilized in both primary and secondary schools in different Borderland regions. Each of these models presents a different attempt to maximize the effectiveness of the PTC and match the ever increasing time demands placed on parents/guardians.

### Table 1: PTC Models

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<td>• Wednesday: 4:30-7:30</td>
<td>• Wednesday: Regular School</td>
<td>• Wednesday: Regular School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thursday: 7:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.</td>
<td>• Thursday: 7:55 a.m.-4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>• Thursday: 7:55 a.m.-8:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Friday: No School</td>
<td>• Friday: 7:55 a.m.-4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>• Friday: 7:55 a.m.-12:00 p.m.</td>
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Research shows that increased parent and teacher communication helps strengthen relationships and decreases the home to school gap. For example, Cameron and Lee (1997) found that educators who bought into and employed an alternative telephone voice mail system reported multiple enhancements in the areas of quality and quantity of communication with parents. According to Rice (2006) educators who established some form of early positive communication with parents maximized their relationship and built a foundation for active communication throughout the school year. More recently, Schumacker (2008) found that 91% of parents who took part in a teacher initiated PTC felt stronger connections had been made.

Sadly, despite the positive implications of each of the programs outlined above, the educational system continues to fail to attain more than 60% of parents/guardians involvement at PTC. To enhance parental/guardian engagement and the overall success of PTC the authors propose a paradigm shift from the current model to a home visit model. In addition to the HVM, educators should combine the HVM with one-or-more communication models (noted above). Finally, the proposed HVM and selected communication models will provide critical information and data that will be conducive to minimizing the vastly growing gap between school and home.

Wagner, Spiker, and Linn (2003) suggested that home visits help shift the academic, social, and life outcomes of students with EBD in a more positive direction. Furthermore, quality home visits assist educators and parents with early intervention strategies; build positive educator, parent, and student relationships; and increase transition planning (Lane, Stanton-Chapman, Jamison, & Phillips, 2007; Rotigel, 2003).
Coinciding with McBride and Peterson’s (1997) findings, the proposed HVM will play a vital role in the overall improvement and outcomes of students with EBD. According to Nelson, Epstein, Griffith, and Hopper (2007) the triad-dynamic of educator, parent, and student is a fundamental tool that can be utilized in developing heightening awareness of family needs, promoting effective communication, and modeling socially acceptable behaviors.

As a result of the previously mentioned advantages to quality HVM, the authors advocate two mandatory home visits to the family per semester within school districts that have less than 80% parental involvement at both primary and secondary levels of education. It is our hope that these mandatory visits will replace the traditional PTC and (a) provide new insights and possibilities for assessment; (b) nurture the triad-dynamic; (c) enhance effective communication; (d) diminish the gap between school and home; (e) identify needs and link the family to resources; and (f) ultimately will increase the educational, social, and life outcomes of students with EBD.

Finally, in an attempt to ensure the relevancy of the HVM, it is recommended that faculty and staff members collectively review and revise the model quarterly. Given the unique academic, social, and behavioral needs of student with EBD, reviewing and revising this process should allow educators to stay relevant without becoming complacent with the pre-established parameters of the process.

Summary & Conclusions
The manuscript of this paper was to provide the reader with a synthesis of literature relevant to students with EBD. It outlined and defined major factors involved in the academic, social, and life outcomes of these students including parental influence, family unit, and personal perspective. In addition, two research based recommendations and implementation guidelines were provided to facilitate greater educational and social outcomes for students identified as EBD in school environments by employing a home visit model.

REFERENCES


The many discourses surrounding borderland students place existing educational policies in a tenuous space. The theories of cosmopolitanism and democratic education will be used to highlight how our borderland schools should approach culturally relevant education taking into account this specific student population.

“‘It’s okay because we’re all human, don’t get mad ‘cause we’re not the same’”

John Dewey commented on the early problems of supporting a comprehensive plan for education. He articulated, “One of the fundamental problems of education in and for a democratic society is set by the conflict of a nationalistic and a wider social aim. The earlier cosmopolitan and ‘humanitarian’ conception suffered both from vagueness and from lack of definite organs of execution and agencies of administration” (Dewey, 1916, p. 113). The vagueness and lack of execution Dewey spoke of years ago is still prevalent today in the aims of education, especially education relevant to borderland students. The many discourses surrounding borderland students place existing educational policies and curriculum in a tenuous space. These discourses include conversations in conceptual and pedagogical tools for education. In light of this, this research will examine the following central questions: How and what should our borderland schools teach? And how should educational leaders rethink schooling for borderland students taking into account culture?

Living and working as an educator in the New Mexico borderland highlights a unique and evolving set of skills that our Hispanic and Latino students should have access to for academic and life success. If schools are truly sites for social change and educational leaders conduits for such transformation, then humanistic educational endeavors specific to cultural codes and taking into account geographic, in this case borderland, issues should be included in schooling. Using the theory of cosmopolitanism and highlights from democratic education, this paper will underscore how and what our borderland schools should teach and educational leaders should advocate for taking into consideration culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy.

Important to this discussion is the recognition of the Borderland area as transnational corporation. This is in part due to the interplay of dual languages and cultures, as well as the commerce and trade that is indicative of this Southwest area. As such, it is important to edify students for citizenship that is global in scope. Educating students for global citizenship is imperative as the notion of the “citizen” is constantly evolving. This citizenship involves critical thinking skills that are cross-cultural and enable empathetic discourses; a boon to this type of citizenship is Human Rights Education (HRE).

Statement of the Problem
This research is couched in the importance of recognizing the educational disservice being done to students in this region, and moreover sounding a peremptory call to action to address the to address critical social and economic issues that impact our youth. New Mexico and its borderland are experiencing growing rates of teenage pregnancy. The teen birth rate in New Mexico is 64.1, the second highest in the country, more than 60% higher than the national average of 41.9. Additionally, New Mexico has a higher dropout rate 40% ranked 5th in the nation. One in five adults --25 years and older—in the state lacks a high school diploma, and in Southern New Mexico the number swells to a startling one in three. Regarding low-income non-dominant students, by the age of nine many are already three grade levels behind in reading and math because of systemic inequities and inadequate resources targeting impoverished school-age

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1 Statistic is based on the number of live births per 1,000 females aged 15-19
2 Statistic is from the NM Department of Health: Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Report Card 2007.
3 Non-dominant students refer to those who are typically termed as minority.
children. Most low-income students begin their high school careers lagging behind in academic achievement, and only half of those students will obtain a high school diploma. This in turn affects workforce development in the state. According to Border Kids Count 2007, the state of New Mexico loses almost $260,000 over the lifetime of each high school dropout; with about 12,700 of New Mexico’s children dropping out of high school every year, this translates into $3.3 billion lost in wages, taxes, and productivity. Lastly, and keeping in mind the above contributing factors, New Mexico ranks high in the number of children living in poverty. With nearly one-fourth (24.1%) of New Mexico’s children living in poverty, the number swells to 32.5% of children living in poverty in Dona Ana County and the state ranks sixth in terms of children living in families with incomes below the federal poverty level of $20,444 for a family of four (New Mexico Kids Count, 2009).

The information presented above explores a myriad of other multifaceted issues. These issues become crises of health, economics, and important to this research, education. It is critical, to educate this group of students in a manner consistent with cultural groundings, societal demands, and most important, self-worth and self-sufficiency. The time is now to promulgate conversations about education grounded in self-worth and advocacy that is culturally responsive and not operationalized as a Westernized hegemonic form.

Purpose
An aim of this research is to aid students in understanding civic and human rights education concepts. In introducing these concepts, students will be able to increase literacy skills and social development. Moreover, the aim of this study is to aid educational leaders in gathering information as it pertains to whether 3rd grade students can comprehend theoretically and practically the concepts associated with civic and human rights education. This information will be used to better understand how these types of social justice curricula can be implemented in public schools, and how human rights education can be used to promote a peaceful, fun, and effective learning environment in schools. In general, these aims can be used to better understand the needs of New Mexico and more specifically, Southern New Mexico’s children, so educators can better serve the diverse student populations.

Significance
The significance of this research is two-fold. This research is important as it can potentially introduce students to culturally relevant practices and social justice skills. Moreover, if the concepts are taught in conjunction with the student experiences this research may help to reduce bullying, increase self-esteem, and encourage diversity of thought and practice. Next, this research may have a positive effect on the way educational leadership programs in the Southwest Borderland areas approach and design curricula for leadership preparation programs.

Research Questions
The two main research questions for this study are: (1) How and what should our borderland schools teach?, (2) How should educational leaders rethink schooling for borderland students taking into account cultural?, and more specifically, (3) How can educational leaders use human rights and civic education to become advocates for social justice transformation in public schools?

Philosophical Analysis for Justice
Philosophical analysis adheres to the goals of improving social and economic conditions on a macro-level, with serious investment in the ideals of equality and opportunity. It is because this type of educational research invokes the practice of reflective equilibrium (Rawls, 1971). This methodological tool aids in translating theoretical concepts, like democracy, equality, and justice into practice. It is a dialectical analytical process that increases personal reflection, investigates competing viewpoints, and strives for understanding and compromise. Rawls’s (1971) general idea follows common notions of the usefulness of philosophical inquiry in education. Consider Burbules’ historically informed point: “A philosophy of education was intimately linked with the argument for a conception of personal betterment and social perfectibility that would serve both to initiate, guide, and inspire practitioners, and to justify this set of aims to a broader public that was being asked to support and fund educational programs on an unprecedented scale” (Burbules, 2000, p. 3). Theory infused practice begins at individually reflective levels and spreads outward to public discourse and action, building on concentric patterns.

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4 Statistic is from Border Kids Count 2007 by New Mexico Voices for Children.
Philosophical analysis allows the prescription of a theory to remain contemporary with shifting economic, social, and political conditions. By asking questions in the form, how should X be in terms of Y, scholars of educational philosophy are able to pose and dissect questions in current climates while examining the effects of past and present decisions. As Noddings stated, “We cannot decide entirely by empirical methods – methods of experiment and observation – what the aims of education should be. Rather, we have to argue from certain basic premises or by positing certain likely effects of our choices” (Noddings, 1995, p. 4). This methodological process is reflexive and helps to inform future policies. Therefore, a philosophical analysis provides a vantage that circumnavigates time and sociopolitical conditions.

Central issues of this research paper integrate the ideas of freedom, equity, and social justice and suggest an improvement upon the idea of education for our borderland students. These matters are cardinal underpinnings of philosophical inquiry and thus this research must begin at that base. Moses (2002) stated, “Examination of education policy issues and debates is central to the field of philosophy of education. This, in turn, places philosophy of education scholarship at the heart of educational research. The various philosophical examinations of inequality in schools and universities highlight the importance of such work” (p. 21). Philosophy as educational research is timeless. It is an antecedent for progressive social change within education and the larger discourse of social systems, including multicultural and social justice debates.

**Cosmopolitanism as a Conceptual Tool**

Nussbaum’s vision for citizenship education is grounded in the idea of cosmopolitanism. The core view shared by supporters of cosmopolitanism is, “the idea that all human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, do belong to a single community, and that this community should be cultivated” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005, ¶ 1). Nussbaum contends that the person whose primary allegiance is to the community of human beings in the entire world is more apt to be devoted to the moral ideals of justice and equality (Nussbaum, 1996). Furthermore, her belief is that we, as humans, should give our allegiance first to what is morally good for all human beings. By doing so, Nussbaum asserts that this will help to answer some of the core questions at the heart of cosmopolitan education: “Should students be taught that they are above all citizens of the United States, or should they instead be taught that they are above all citizens of a world of human beings, and that, while they themselves happen to be situated in the United States, they have to share this world of human beings with the citizens of other countries?” (Nussbaum, 1996, p. 6).

In her explanation for civic education based in cosmopolitanism, Nussbaum explores four reasons to endorse an education for world citizenship. These rationales are grounded in stoicism and do not ask that citizens give up local identifications, but rather keep those differences in mind as a source of richness. The goal is to become a “cosmopolitan” – a citizen of the world, someone whose loyalty is not to a particular locality or cultural order but to humanity (Nussbaum, 1996). That in turn can help develop in citizens a devotion to “make all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern, base our political deliberations on interlocking commonality, and give the circle that defines our humanity a special attention and respect” (Nussbaum, 1996, p. 9). Adherence to these four guiding principles will make world citizenship, rather than democratic citizenship, the focus of education. The following are Nussbaum’s four arguments for curricula based in world citizenship: (1) Through cosmopolitan education, we learn more about ourselves, (2) We make headway solving problems that require international focus, (3) We recognize moral obligations to the rest of the world that are real, and that would otherwise go unrecognized, and (4) We make a consistent and coherent argument based on distinctions we are really prepared to defend (Nussbaum, 1996, pp. 11-15). By focusing on these four foundations as the core of cosmopolitan education, a just or civil society will be produced. The notion of cosmopolitanism is important for our borderland students because often times there is a disconnect between the “practical world” and the “educational world.” It is imperative to draw connections and parallels between these two worlds so they do not assume a position of separateness or autonomy, but rather show that they are intrinsically intertwined and interdependent.

**Human Rights Education as a Pedagogical Tool**

Currently, there is no nationally sanctioned requirement for human rights education in public schools. Much like civic education, human rights education (HRE) is an important pedagogical
component, which encourages informed participation by civicly responsible individuals in an intercultural and global society. HRE teaches students about many of the concepts needed to be an empathetic and socially just member of a pluralistic society; these key civicly minded concepts include, social justice, tolerance, solidarity, participation, equality, and human dignity. Sensitization of these concepts will prepare students about human rights, for human rights, and towards a human rights consciousness. As such, students can recognize social injustices (civic intelligence) and become advocates of such injustices (civic responsibility) evident in their immediate schools and communities. This sort of active and engaged participation will promote a deliberation of democratic principles, an increase in moral engagement, and an informed civil society (civic patriotism).

At its core, human rights education discusses the worth of each individual as a human, and therefore values the rights, liberties, and distinctiveness of each person. HRE makes the thoughtful transition from the individual to the global community – as the process is evolutionary. As such, human rights education compliments the theory of cosmopolitanism well as it elaborates on the importance of human individuality.

The United Nations has defined Human Rights Education as “training, dissemination, and information efforts aimed at building of a universal culture of human rights through imparting of knowledge and skills and the molding of attitudes which are directed to: (a) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; (b) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity; (c) The promotion of understanding, respect, gender equality, and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups; and (d) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society” (Flowers, 1998, para. 2). Lastly, human rights education believes that human rights belong both to the individual as well as society at a whole (Flowers, 1998). Meaning that these democratically based efforts work in conjunction or in tandem with one another, not against or in competition with one another. Individual rights cannot lay prostrate to democratic rights. In order to promote the notions ascribed to a democratic state, citizens must actively promote and participate in an agenda that is inclusive of, and not at all separate from, the responsibility to advance human rights and move towards a “politics of people.”

Research Study Design
This research was conducted during the summer of 2009 with elementary school aged students, specifically grades 3 and 4, who needed or opted for extra assistance in the area of literacy comprehension. Participation in this study was voluntary. The participants were from a 3rd grade class participating in the K-3+ Literacy Program offered by the Las Cruces Public School System. The K-3+ Literacy Program focuses on literacy, numeracy, and social development for economically disadvantaged students (Las Cruces Public Schools, 2007).

The school site selected serves approximately 556 students in grades K-5th; 84% of which are Hispanic (Las Cruces Public Schools Demographic Counts, 2009). The participants, who self-selected via parent permission to participate in this study, mirrored the demographic make-up of the school. In total, 12 students agreed to participate in the study, however the number that attended class during research sessions varied due to unexpected absences.

Philosophical and Participatory Action Research (PAR) were the methodological tools used for this study. The participatory action research took place over a six-week time for four to five hours per week during the summer months of July and August 2009. PAR, oft times called action research, is in its most simple term the idea of “learning by doing” (O’Brien, 2001). PAR is distinctive from token problem solving in that there is strong significance placed on reflective practice and recurrent systematic changes based on theoretical considerations. Most important, PAR puts the participants, in this case the students, at the center of the research being conducted. O’Brien stated, “Several attributes separate action research from other types of research. Primary is its focus on turning the people involved into researchers, too - people learn best, and more willingly apply what they have learned, when they do it themselves. It also has a social dimension - the research takes place in real-world situations, and aims to solve real problems” (2001, para. 6).

Important to this research is the notion of PAR as a critical pedagogy that attempts to encourage social change from a nonhierarchical
level and places an emphasis on power dynamics as explorative dimensions for analysis. Freire (1971) argued for a critical pedagogy that incorporated the student in the learning process, rather than alienating the learner to an empty vessel-like position taking on information in a blank state. As Fine stated, “Repositioning youth as researchers rather than the ‘researched’ shifts the practice of researching ‘on youth’ to ‘with youth’ - a position that stands in sharp contrast to the current neo-liberal constructions of youth as dangerous, disengaged, blind consumers who lack any type of connection” (2007, para.12). This sort of research challenges the traditional empirical or heuristic models of research, while calling into question who can produce “valuable” knowledge. As such, PAR is a decolonizing methodology; a methodology that decolonizes knowledge. Keeping in mind that inherent to this research is the responsibility to advance human rights and move towards a “politics of people” then the research methodology should be for and inclusive of the people.

In-depth field notes, document analysis, participatory observations, and focus groups discussions were used to examine the context by students understand civic and human rights education within the framework of social justice. The data collected in this study were used to examine emergent themes and best practices for understanding how students learn and best understand topics like social justice, human rights, and civics as well as how educational leaders should address these issues.

Emergent Themes and Findings
Throughout the six-week session with the students various topics regarding civic education, human rights, and social justice were examined. The exploration of these topics synthesized research-based concepts with experiential learning and real-world examples embedded in curricula. Intrinsic interest promotes agency in learning and invokes power within the school environment. Topics were discussed using students’ auditory, visual, and verbal skills, and incorporated kinesthetic methods, like drawing, storyboarding, and use of manipulatives. The researcher used student-led discussions, case studies, story telling, and focus groups to broach topics. Important to note, the researcher used a written pre-test to gain preliminary insight into the students’ knowledge bases regarding set topics, but used an oral post-test to complete the six-week session.

This shift was due to the increased level of comfort and candor students had expressing themselves verbally.

Homogeneity as an Informal Teaching Tool
At the beginning of the study and before students were introduced to basic concepts of human rights they were asked, “What do human rights and equality mean to you?” Examples of responses included the following:
- Back the, blacks couldn’t vote or nothing.
- Women couldn’t marry different colors.
- Black people couldn’t go to school with white people.
- Blacks had to work as slaves and do whatever the white people told them to do.
- Some black lady got on a bus and said she wouldn’t get off.
- Slaves couldn’t escape or they would be whipped.

Students were also asked about language and the use of language in home, work, and public spaces. Students were asked, “What does ‘language’ mean to you?” Examples of responses included the following:
- Language helps you talk to people.
- We speak Spanish in my house, but when I come to school I speak English.
- Everyone I know speaks Spanish and some people speak English.
- My grandmother speaks only Spanish and I help her when she goes to the store or bank.

Recognizing Difference
Throughout the six-week session, students explored concepts of how people are similar and different. Case studies were used to elicit responses from students regarding these issues. One case study in particular sparked an abundance of responses. The case study described how a student, Billy, was having a birthday party, and everyone in the class was invited except Jose and Guadalupe. No other information was given. Examples of responses included the following:
- They knew they were Mexicans and didn’t want them there.
- They didn’t want them there because they were a different skin color.
- They can’t talk because they’re different.
• They didn’t want them there because they would probably steal stuff.
• Just because he is brown doesn’t mean you should hate him.
• They would ruin his party, rip up his presents and be mean.

Other examples of student recognizing difference included:
• My religion is different and people make fun of me all the time and I don’t like it.
• I have to help my mom clean the house and make dinner, but my brother doesn’t have to and it makes me mad.
• Women just take care of the children.
• Whites are richer people.
• Homeless people get and buy drugs so they shouldn’t have a house.

Taking Care of Mother Earth
Students were asked to describe what the words kindness, respect, responsibility, and teamwork meant to them. They were asked to do this through writings, discussions, individual concept mapping, and team drawings. Examples of responses included the following:

• We need to take care of the Earth and be kind to the Earth and recycl.
• I go around my neighborhood and pick up garbage and cigarette butts, because I am responsible.
• We are all working together to pick up the trash.
• I picked the weeds in my grandmother’s garden.
• We can work as a team to clean up the school playground.
• We have to respect the Earth because it gives us plants so we can breathe the air.
• Don’t cut all the trees down, we respect the Earth and need to take care of it.

Parallel to these responses were team drawings on large pieces of butcher paper. Students were broken up into four teams and asked to draw a picture of kindness, respect, responsibility, and teamwork. Each group, independent of the other, drew a picture that represented these words in terms of the Earth and recycling.

Findings
The following findings detail the results of the study using the data collected and are interwoven with the emergent themes.

• Homogeneity is a potent informal teaching tool for students. The examination of racial tension and prejudice was most often discussed in terms of black and white, and was not inclusive of other race or ethnic groups. Interestingly, bilingualism was only addressed in terms of Spanish and English and no other languages were recognized. These binaries informed students’ perspectives on social justice topics.

• Students are able to recognize differences based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, and language. Interplaying with that recognition is that “different” can be seen as bad or negative.

• The discourse of kindness, respect, responsibility, and teamwork was overwhelmingly associated with the environment and recycling. Human associations were not made to these concepts unless specifically guided.

• The use of case studies, personal story telling, and experiential information are powerful learning strategies for engaging students, eliciting student responses and outcomes, and harboring critical thinking skills in terms of advocating for social justice topics.

• Communicating oral histories are important tools for students to express themselves; students are interlocutors of their own knowledge.
Recommendations

Based on the theoretical and pedagogical tools of inquiry and the findings from the data collected, the following recommendations grouped in two sets are put forth.

Students are Organic Intellectuals

- In the spirit of Gramsci (1971), students should be considered organic intellectuals. That is, individuals who are grounded in the intellectualism of their own specific community, giving rise to social change and reform through connectivity with people especially in terms of experiential knowledge. Within this frame, students can use their positionality to enrich their community so that collective, informed action can occur.

- Students should be co-creators of their edupolitical world and knowledge bases. Experiential education should be valued, emphasized, and heralded. It should foment excitement in students from an otherwise desultory set of educational ideas.

Conclusions

Progressive culturally relevant education is requisite in constructing an educational platform for borderland students, as it accesses one’s educational identity - a constant companion in the classroom. A strategy within that philosophy is to value the learner as a unique individual with a personal investment in the class. The region in which this research was conducted is socioculturally diverse; the students represent a mixture of ethnic backgrounds, family design, and educational proclivities. Learning from and with students’ experiences and multicultural struggles is a valuable tool that offers a vastly different perspective from solely observing a classroom and learning from others. It is imperative that educational leaders adopt an edupolitical stance that exalts student inclusion and experience-based learning. This enables a democratic community of learning in which teachers and students are, as Freire (1970) would assert, “critical co-investigators.” This student-centered focus provides a balance and reciprocity of educational ideas and curricula. In its most nascent form this balance helps provide for a democratic community of learning and exploration.

References


This study investigated the interpretation of mathematics word problems by 52 English Language Learners (ELLs) with Learning Disabilities (LD) in Grades 6, 7, and 8. More specifically, this inquiry examined how well the ELLs with LD performed on the word problems; whether they appeared confident that they could solve the problems; and what actions they took to solve the word problems immediately after reading them. Further, this study sought to determine whether any relationships existed between reading level, math level, English Proficiency and perceived confidence or action taken to solve a problem. The results revealed some pedagogical implications for teaching mathematics problem solving to ELLs with LD in middle school. The results also invite additional inquiries into mathematical problem solving.

The results of the last decade of mathematics assessment suggest that American children and youth are seriously deficient in their mathematics problem solving abilities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). The problem of mathematics underachievement appears to be particularly troublesome for students with disabilities and those at risk for mathematics failure (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Prentice, 2004; Hale, Fiorello, Bertin & Sherman, 2003; Jitendra & Ping, 1997). Striking achievement differences in mathematics are also evident in comparisons of culturally diverse students, which in the case of Hispanic students provide some insight into the achievement of English Language Learners (ELLs). According to the Condition of Education Report (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009):

The gap between White and Hispanic 4th-graders (21 points) in 2007 was not measurably different from the gap in 1990 despite fluctuations over time. In 2007, among 8th-graders, the White-Black mathematics gap was 32 points (smaller than the gap in 2005), and the White-Hispanic gap was 26 points (not measurably different from the gap in 2005). (p. 6)

There is a need to address the discrepancies of mathematics problem solving for ELLs with disabilities because it is important that all students acquire mathematics skills in order to succeed. Indeed, daily living requires the application of mathematics skills for planning and monitoring time, computing percentages, making estimates, interpreting recipe measurements, measuring rooms for carpet purchases, assessing scores in games, handling banking transactions, and maintaining a checkbook. Knowing how to problem solve in mathematics enhances an individual’s ability to perform complex operations contingent upon knowledge of basic operations (Robinson, Menchetti, & Torgesen, 2002). Additionally, mathematics problem solving is important in our technologically advanced society for securing a vast variety and number of jobs. Though vitally important, problem solving skills in mathematics are not acquired readily.

English Language Learners with Disabilities and Mathematics Word Problems

Acquiring mathematics skills is challenging for many students, but even more so for English language learners students with learning disabilities. Many students with learning problems have mathematics deficiencies that result in practical and emotional problems (Combs, Flitecher, Parra, & Jimenez, 2005; Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, & Appleton, 2003; Mercer & Mercer, 1998). Mercer (1997) found that memory deficiencies impede the acquisition of mathematical concepts. Steele (2002) noted that a fundamental characteristic of learning disabilities is that “processing problems can also create an obstacle to mathematics learning” (p. 140). Given the poor mathematics progress of students with learning problems and the call for reform in mathematics education to increase standards, a need clearly exists to design an effective
mathematics curriculum for these students (Rodríguez, Parmar & Signer, 2001). Without mathematics instruction, these students will continue to face much frustration and failure. Systemically, low scores on mathematics problems on standardized tests result in lower grades for schools, which leads to high levels of anxiety in students, teachers, and administrators (Saenz, Fuchs, Fuchs, 2005; Seethaler & Fuchs, 2005; Mercer & Mercer, 1998).

English language learners (ELLs) are among the most academically at-risk groups in schools today and their numbers are rising steadily. On average, ELLs receive lower grades, score below their classmates on standardized reading and mathematics tests, and are often judged by their teachers as academic “underachievers.” According to annual state education agency survey data, it is estimated that 5,074,572 Limited English Proficient (LEP) students were enrolled in public schools (pre-K through Grade 12) for the 2005-2006 school year. This number represents approximately 10.3% of total public school student enrollment. Research suggests that the mathematics deficiencies of students with learning problems emerge in the early years and continue through secondary school (Combs, et al, 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; Jitendra & Ping, 1997; Mercer & Mercer, 1998). Further, those studies reported that the mathematics knowledge of students with learning disabilities tends to progress approximately 1 year for every 2 years of school attendance. As cited by Davis-McCray and García “English-language learners (ELLs) with disabilities need special education instruction and services in the language(s) that best serve their educational needs” (Cloud, 1993; Ortiz & García, 1990 p. 610).

Based on data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), it appears that mathematics word problem solving, in particular, is difficult for students of all ages and ability levels. Specifically, students with disabilities and at risk students who have difficulties with reading, computations or both are likely to encounter difficulties with word problem solving (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005). The importance of providing quality instruction to students with disabilities and those at risk for mathematics failure is unmistakably clear. Indeed, the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) identified “problem solving as its number one priority agenda for action” (NCTM, cited in Jitendra & Ping 1997). Unfortunately, except for a few isolated examples, very little research regarding the mathematics instructional practices for ELL students with disabilities has been done (Rodríguez, Parmar, Signer, 2001; Secada & De La Cruz 1996; Torres-Velásquez & Rodríguez, 2005). Although there is a wide variety of research in the area of mathematics for monolingual regular students, the research in the area of ELLs with disabilities is alarmingly scarce. This is especially important given current data which indicate that ELLs continue to comprise a disproportionate number of children receiving special education services (Baca & Cervantes, 2003). According to U.S. Census Bureau projections (2008), by the year 2010 the United States will have approximately 310 million people and that one out of every three persons will be Black, Latino, or Asian. This poses unique challenges and opportunities for public education across this country and specifically in school districts where ethnic diversity is most prevalent. Addressing the instructional and social needs of these students is therefore a major concern of many state and local education agencies.

Ping-Xin, Jitendra, & Deatline-Buchman (2005) investigated the differential effect of problem solving instructional approaches. They compared the differential effects of schema-based and general strategy instruction on mathematical problem performance of middle school students with learning problems. The results indicated that there were significant differences between the schema-based instruction and general strategy instruction. Further, they concluded that schema-based instruction improved the performance of middle school students with learning problems. This study is motivated by three circumstances in addition to the ones discussed previously. First, the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics stresses the development of mathematics communication skills concurrent with reasoning and problem solving (e.g., PSSM, 2000). Second, there is an increasing need to address and ensure the full participation and maximum achievement of students with a variety of barriers to learning (limited English proficiency, disability, and educational resources). Third, mathematics is a subject which produces high failure rates in both general education and special education, especially ELLs with learning disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; Parmar, Cawley, & Frizita, 1996; Rodríguez, Parmar, & Signer, 2001).
Purpose
Little research has been done on problem solving in the middle school level for ELLs with learning disabilities. The paucity of research in this area makes this topic important, especially in light of the practical need for mathematics skills. In order to pursue the goals of this study the researchers sought to gain insights into the following research questions.

1. What do ELL students with disabilities know about solving word problems in mathematics? How successful were the participants (English Language Learners with disabilities) at solving the word problems?
2. What strategies do ELLs with LD use while solving a mathematics word problem? More specifically, what actions did the subjects take to solve the word problem immediately after reading them?
3. Did the subjects appear overconfident?
4. Are there relationships between reading level, math level, English Proficiency and action taken to solve a problem? Are there relationships between reading level, math level, English Proficiency and perceived confidence? Taken individually, the fourth research question is comprised of the following six questions.
   a. Is there a relationship between reading level and action taken?
   b. Is there a relationship between reading level and perceived confidence?
   c. Is there a relationship between math level and action taken?
   d. Is there a relationship between math level and perceived confidence?
   e. Is there a relationship between English proficiency and action taken?
   f. Is there a relationship between English proficiency and perceived confidence?

Methods
Settings and Participants
This research was conducted at one particular middle school in an urban area in South Florida. Of the 1175 students in the school, 880 (74%) were Hispanic; 185 (16%) were Black; 92 (8%) were White; 11 (1%) were Asian; and 16 (1%) were Multiracial. With respect to gender of the participants, 608 (52%) were male and 567 (48%) were female. In the Title 1 middle school in which data were collected, 810 students (69%) were eligible for free or reduced cost lunch. The number of students with exceptionalities was 324 (28%). The number of bilingual ESL students was 370 (31%). Participating in this study were 52 English language learners with disabilities from sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Twelve participants were in Grade 6 and 20 participants were in each of Grades 7 and 8.

Procedure
First, the researchers collected parental permission letters. During data collection, one investigator met with each of the 52 participants individually. Each participant read, interpreted, and attempted to solve three word problems. While each participant worked, the investigator recorded behavior and rated the participant’s attitude. To ensure consistency in the data collection protocol, an observation sheet was attached to each set of mathematics word problems. The investigator recorded what the participants did to solve the problem. The investigator also rated the participant’s confidence level based on the speed with which the participant began to work on the problem after reading it; any comments made by the participant concerning efficacy; and the participant’s facial expression. Table 4 contains the coding sheet used as the checklist for rating various behaviors.

Instrumentation
Students in this study completed mathematics word problems adapted from the textbook Math Advantage Middle School (Burton, & Maletsky, 1998), which was the textbook used in the classroom. Tables 1, 2, and 3 identify the specific word problems the participants completed.

Insert table 4: Behavior and Attitude Checklist
In addition to those problem-solving data, the investigators received permission from the parents to collect each participant’s reading level, math level, and English Proficiency rating. Chi square tests were performed using the categorical data derived from each of those instruments and the problem solving action code. A second series of Chi square tests was performed using the categorical reading level, math level, English Proficiency rating and the perceived confidence rating.
Results
This research design presents a rare opportunity. Often single-subject designs are necessary when studying special education students, but the large numbers of ELLs with disabilities in the cooperating school district made this design possible here. Each data analysis procedure was selected specifically to address the requirements of each research question. The results for each research question are considered in turn.

1. What do ELL students with disabilities know about solving word problems in mathematics? How successful were the participants (English Language Learners with disabilities) at solving the word problems?

As evident in Table 5, the vast majority of the participants in Grade 6 correctly solved all three parts of the first word problem. For Problem 2, 67% answered correctly and 75% answered the third problem correctly. In light of those results, with respect to the first research question, we can state that in general the Grade 6 ELL participants with LD knew how to reason through a word problem in order to determine which arithmetic operation or operations to perform and successfully carry out the necessary operation, whether the operation was addition, subtraction, or multiplication.

The low success rates for the problems attempted by the participants in Grade 7 indicate that decoding the language in such a way as to recognize that they needed to subtract 14 by 5, leaving 9, and then divide 9 by 1.50 (the hourly parking rate). Further, participants needed to add one hour to the quotient derived from dividing 9 by 1.5. The third problem indicated that 90% of the participants were unable to recognize and perform the division of two whole numbers. This result is surprising. In general, though, the data for the seventh grade indicate that ELLs with LD were not able to analyze word problems that require multiple arithmetic operations.

Eighth grade data for the first problem indicate that about half of the ELLs with LD knew when to correctly use a bar or line graph. Problem 2 indicates that 75% of the ELLs with disabilities were able to analyze a word problem and perform addition and subtraction. For Item 3 it is not clear whether the ELLs with disabilities could create a multiple line graph since they had not yet learned that skill.

2. What strategies do ELL students with disabilities use while solving a mathematics word problem? More specifically, what actions did the subjects take after reading a mathematics word problem?

With respect to Grade 6, for all three problems, the participants immediately attempted to solve the problem. In Grade 7, the participants attempted to solve Problems 1 and 2 immediately. In Problem 3, however, about one third of the participants sought a translation to Spanish. In Grade 8, for all three problems, a majority of students sought a translation to Spanish.

3. Did the subjects appear overconfident?

In Grade 6, the large number of participants who answered the three problems correctly justifies their confidence. In Grade 7, the case is much different. For Problem 1, while only one student completed the problem correctly, only two students were perceived as lacking confidence. In that case, the participants were clearly overconfident. For Problem 2, eight students appeared confident, but answered incorrectly.
In Problem 3, 11 students who appeared confident actually answered incorrectly. Overall, then, in Grade 7 the apparent confidence of some students was not justified. In Grade 8, only one student who answered Problem 1 incorrectly appeared confident. Only two students who answered Problem 2 incorrectly appeared confident. For Problem 3, 9 students who answered incorrectly appeared confident. In this last case, the apparent confidence was not justified. Over all three grades, generally speaking, the confidence evident in the actions of students was often justified, but the data reveal that there were times when the participants appeared overconfident.

4. Are there relationships between reading level, math level, English Proficiency and action taken to solve a problem? Are there relationships between reading level, math level, English Proficiency and perceived confidence?

Chi-square analyses for Grade 6 revealed only one statistically significant result at the 0.1 level. Specifically, for Problem Number 2, English proficiency scores were positively related to perceived confidence (probability 0.067). Chi-square analyses for Grade 7 also revealed only one statistically significant result at the 0.1 level. On Problem 2, Reading level was positively related to perceived confidence (probability 0.062). In Grade 8, for all three problems, the English Proficiency and Perceived Confidence data led to statistically significant chi-square results (problem 1, probability 0.02; problem 2, probability 0.02; problem 3, probability 0.073).

Implications for Practice
The research literature clearly indicates the following: (a) there has been limited attention given to ways of enhancing mathematics concept development and communication to ELLs with disabilities and those at risk (Parmar, Cawley, & Frazita, 1996; Tate, 1995); (b) there is a clear indication that poor performance and lack of basic concepts in the early years leads to future school failure in mathematics, and possible identification of mathematics disabilities (Saint-Laurent, Glasson, & Couture, 1998; TIMMS, 2004); (c) there is a clear link between poor literacy skills and low levels of mathematics achievement for ELLs with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; Secada & De La Cruz 1996; Senn-Fennel, 1995); and (d) teachers in the early grades are eager to prioritize mathematics, but tend to focus on basic skills rather than concepts and mathematics literacy (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Appleton, 2003; English & Halford, 1995; Johnson, Gallager, Cook & Wong, 1995). It seems that English language learners with learning disabilities in the middle school are impulsive (Steele, 2002), lack confidence (Rodríguez, et. al., 2001), and feel overwhelmed (Mercer, 1998) even before starting the word problems. Steele (2002) recommends for students with learning disabilities in the middle school to use step by step procedures that are effective for the instruction of mathematics. Further, she suggests splitting the problems into steps in order to make the activity seem controllable for learners. Teachers need to ensure that English language learners with learning disabilities focus on connections of mathematics concepts with real life concepts. In other words, learners need to engage in meaningful learning. Bilingual special education has opened up new possibilities and territories for a new era of careful and effective implementation of programs for ELLs with disabilities (Rodríguez, 2009).

Conclusion
How do we ensure that the language of mathematics is effectively taught and communicated to ELLs with learning disabilities when they do not have the necessary English language proficiency to understand mathematics content and skills? This research sought to enhance the knowledge base for teacher preparation in order to educate ELLs with disabilities in the ways students think, process, and understand mathematics word problems. It was expected that the findings of the study would provide insights into word problem solving strategies used by ELLs with disabilities. The mixed results by grade level invite further inquiry. Additional investigations into the mathematics knowledge and strategic processes of ELLs with disabilities will help improve mathematics instructions and, at the same time, inform the construction of alternative modes of mathematics instruction. In particular, it may be helpful to investigate factors of successful mathematics applications for ELLs with LD. Such inquiries would likely assist educators teaching mathematics concepts to this population. This is especially important for research focused on the enabling, rather than the disabling, attributes of culturally distinct populations.
The researchers hopes that this study help increase the knowledge base for teacher preparation to educate ELLs with disabilities in light of the way students think, process, and understand mathematics word problems.

REFERENCES


Steele, M. M. (2002). Strategies for helping students who have learning disabilities in mathematics. *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School, 8* (3) 140-143.


Table 1. Word Problems for Grade 6

A. CDs Bought
Brenda 12 - Selena 17 - Ricardo 18 - Nick 23

How many CD were bought in all?

Whose purchases can be combined to total 30 CDs?

If Nick gives 12 CDs to his cousin, how many would he have left?

B. William had $64 to spend. He spent $18 on books, $22 on shoes, and $7 for movie ticket. About how much does he have left?

C. Robert’s family lives in a house. Robert’s parents pay $725 each month for rent.

How much rent do they pay in one year?

Table 2. Word Problems for Grade 7

A. To park their car at Islands of Adventure Theme Park, Stephanie’s parents paid $5.00 for the first hour and $1.50 for each additional hour. If they paid $14.00 for parking, how many hours were they at Islands of Adventure Theme Park?

B. A bus travel 55 miles per hour. Anne starts out by bus at 8:00 a.m. How many miles does she travel if she arrives at her destination at 11:00 a.m.?

C. Hector needs to know the decimal equivalent of 1/8 to find the cost of one slice of pizza. Change the fraction to a decimal.

Table 3. Word Problems for Grade 8

A. Joe’s bank balances for June through December were: $210 $359 $600 $400 $1,000 $750 and $900. What kind of graph could you make to see the increases and decreases in his account over six months?

B. David made the following transactions on his bank account in one month:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deposit</td>
<td>$120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check</td>
<td>$35.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check</td>
<td>$63.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deposit</td>
<td>$85.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The balance at the end of the month was $326.29. What was the balance at the beginning of the month?

C. Use the data below to make a multiple line graph:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>82F</td>
<td>78F</td>
<td>75F</td>
<td>64F</td>
<td>70F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>70F</td>
<td>67F</td>
<td>65F</td>
<td>54F</td>
<td>62F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Behavior and Attitude Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student action immediately after reading the problem</th>
<th>Perception of confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Try to solve problem</td>
<td>Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw a figure</td>
<td>Not confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request explanation in Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Performance on all items by grade level and problem number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Number answered correctly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partnerships are collaborative endeavors with a shared purpose, vision, and commitment. They can be structured in many ways for many different purposes but the big idea, within our context of education, is that it is a cooperative relationship to benefit or improve services or programs. This article describes a university-public school mathematics research partnership designed to improve mathematics teaching and learning for all students. This research lead to the development of an Innovation/Configuration map which can be used to assess and plan for productive university-public-school partnerships.

What we have learned from University-Public School Mathematics Partnerships

Building a rigorous math program to support all students learning is a common goal we share in the Scaling Up Mathematics Achievement (SUMA) partnership between the university and public schools. Both the district and the university agree that it is essential to provide improved math-learning opportunities to serve students in our community. The university and public schools both want students to be “successful” in mathematics, but how to accomplish this provides interesting opportunities for partnership learning. Partnerships between the university and public schools are very complex and vulnerable relationships. They are influenced not only by the personalities of the key partners, the cultures of the partners and the collaborative partnership culture, but also impacted by political decisions and the collaborative structures and processes needed for accomplishing project goals over time.

Partnerships are greatly affected by the ways the key stakeholders leverage their beliefs about the project and the ways of working “together” to meet the measurable goals over time. SUMA helped us understand the uniqueness within each school district and how the partnership is able to collaborate in real time, often with very different ways of working and decision-making. In this mutual work, it is an opportunity for partners to not only achieve the project goals but also begin to understand ways for building community and co-constructing partnerships for learning. This requires flexibility about some components like time yet rigidity for other components like commitments to shared goals. It requires understanding the current district initiatives and those that emerge that could have potential impact on the project. It is very important to know the procedural policies and chain of command pathways for effective communication and collaboration within the district or university. It is essential for developing “partnership competence” that honors key stakeholders as individuals and the partnerships collective ways of working.

Determining Willingness, Readiness and Culture for Engaging in the Project

We have many lessons learned through our research partnerships. For example, from the university’s perspective it is critical to know the partner district very well and to understand the organization of the district you will be working with. From the district’s perspective, it is important to understand the theoretical perspectives and beliefs that partnering faculty will bring to the project. In terms of the district, it is essential to understand the history of any previous reforms in the area of the project, to know to what extent the district has centralized versus site-based management and to understand their desire and readiness for change. If a partner district is not really interested in change, it may be difficult to partner successfully on a change initiative.
Many districts think that if they just provide access for researchers to classrooms, students and teachers, they are doing enough. We know now that it takes a shared commitment to goals that could include student-learning goals but also measurable goals that guide the partnership. Assumptions about these essential partnership ingredients can create unneeded obstacles in the relationship. The partnership should understand the need for explicit norms and ways of working to shape a culture for professional learning. It must synergistically focus on purposeful partnering based on shared goals and not on individual partners.

If the district and university agree they are both interested in pursuing a funded project together, it will be important to collaboratively develop written agreements about the goals and objectives of the project, the action or work plan and the specific benchmarks that can be used to determine progress towards the agreed upon goals. These are steps needed in building competent systems that can partner. In addition, a management team made up of leaders from both institutions must agree on roles (who will do what when), regular and sacred meeting times, and equitable communication practices including frequent feedback loops involving research data.

The district will have to establish an internal capacity to support and sustain the partnership efforts through distributed leadership with all stakeholders in the district. Partnerships often fail because only some part of the district personnel are working and they are not sharing their work with others who also need to know about the goals and workings of a partner project. The district as a learning system requires ways to communicate effectively both within the district and in the community. We have learned that sustainable capacity for the work includes developing internal as well as lateral stakeholders understanding and commitment to the project over time. These are essential relationships between stakeholders. Having the support of the school community and those that influence policy such as school boards or key external stakeholders are important considerations in building a broad base for supporting and improving the project over time.

Building from the unique cultures of each partner is essential. It may be important to recognize the differences and the strengths of the cultures of a district as compared to a university faculty research group. In general, the district is concerned with pragmatic actions that can help immediately to resolve what are often crisis situations. School districts often work in emergency room mode to address the moment-to-moment challenges they face. District partners do not often have the luxury of time to reflect on data and its meaning, nor do they have the time to examine different pathways for meeting a goal. University faculty tends to be more reflective and have the time and the expertise to use research-based information as well as critically analyzing any research related to the project. Understanding the strengths and challenges inherent within each of the partners can help to build a more comprehensive honest approach to the work. This recognition allows partners to build on their strengths to develop shared theories of action. Explicit strategies for connecting the research and practice should strengthen the partnership and the student outcomes.

There needs to be an understanding and appreciation for the different work environments including respect for the everyday problems of teaching diverse groups of students while appreciating the knowledge from research. One way to work within two different cultures that was found in previous partnerships is to agree on the purposes, goals of the project and to articulate how each of the partners can contribute to meeting the goals. These initial conversations, agreements, and commitments are essential to the life of partnership work. However, continual focus on the shared goals and processes for enacting and measuring the agreed upon goals is crucial.

**Structures, Processes for Learning**

A central tenet of our research partnership between the university and public schools includes gathering data at both the classroom and district level regarding the mathematics teaching and learning. The careful use of data can be helpful in mediating project decisions. One of the drivers for the Building Capacity Model is the feedback loops. The feedback loops are seen as a data flow based on project goals from the project to the District stakeholders and back to the SUMA researchers. This feedback loop shifted as the District began to develop their own unique internal data pathways to make decisions regarding the mathematics implementation.
There were large changes made within the partner district, as a result of our partnership, about the use of data for school improvement. These changes were integrated into a new district program, Data Driven Decision Making or D3 involving mentoring from central office of school leaders involved in district feeder schools. In an effort to provide schools with an understanding of the data and instructional tools they possessed, some of the district’s Directors of Instruction created the D3. Monthly D3 sessions provided teams of administrators, professional development teachers, district central office coordinators and directors with multiple forms of student data aimed at guiding instructional decisions. In addition to utilizing the data, there was a strong focus on the quality of professional learning communities (PLCs). Each D3 session began with participants reporting the successes and challenges of their school PLCs. In this SUMA partnership, everyone benefited from the increased use of data for making decisions and the district increased their use of data and the university partners asked better questions about what kind of data is worth collecting. We hope to make difference in understanding how to use data that impacts student learning at the classroom level.

Finally, there may be such well established and traditional structures in some organizations that the kinds of “change” innovators want to see may simply not be possible if “teaching is a conserving activity” (Postman, 1987). Schools were designed to pass on the culture to the next generation. They are naturally resistant to change. Schools were initially built for efficient information delivery in a hierarchical structure and did not include professional collaboration between administrators and teachers or teachers collaborating to design and discuss student learning. Again, the cultures, structures, and beliefs of the partners have significant impact on the ability of the partnership to meet the specified goals and build viable partnerships. The partnerships we envision focus on collaboration both within schools and communities as well as within the partners to develop partnership competence, which include the structures and processes for improvement.

Partnerships between universities and school districts require a concerted effort in communication, determining outcomes and expectations prior to embarking on a shared journey. Crucial conversations must take place at the onset to set aside any pre-conceived notions that may exist. Both sides of the partnership must understand that each will support the other and each will learn from the other. But the conversations are ongoing, based on norms, and explicit structures that provide time to build relationships and that bring partners together in doing this challenging work. With this in mind, we have identified keys areas that influence the partnership and compiled these areas in a Partnership Innovation Configuration Map, an IC Map. This is important because both the district and the university will be coming to the table with very different lens and ideas.

We have briefly shared our journey regarding partnerships and have created a “map” that can help university public school partners assess their beginning state as well as analyze their progress along the way. The key features of what we have learned through our partnership are represented in the following IC Map (Table 1.). This tool includes culture, structures, processes and practices, and research tools. It represents key features of partnerships between universities and public schools. It is based on our professional learning as a result the mathematics initiatives with associated research projects in two different partner districts. Hopefully, it will provide a means to assess and analyze key components of the current state of the work to enable conversations and planning that allows the partnership to be more amicable, productive, and support learning at all levels of the system.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Norms for Collaboration</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enacts the agreed upon norms and ways of working that exemplify relational strengths and professional structures within the district and the university; encourages openness to modifying goals and objectives as more is learned from implementation of the project.</td>
<td>Takes explicit actions that have the potential for building relationships, trust, and ways of working between the university and the district. However, agreed upon norms or agreed upon ways of working these norms are inconsistently implemented.</td>
<td>Lacks full implementation of agreed upon norms or agreed upon ways of working; therefore contributing to ineffective communication, mistrust and inadequate Implementation.</td>
<td>Assumes norms or agreed upon ways of working are in place without discussion, ownership, or shared responsibility.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Data Feedback Systems</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Includes key stakeholders (internal and lateral) in inquiry and reflective dialog for analysis and decision-making surrounding project goals and outcomes. Stakeholders are focused on project goals and measurable outcomes, and are able to make adjustments based on data feedback systems.</td>
<td>Uses of inquiry and reflective dialog periodically used for analysis and decision-making surrounding project goals and outcomes. It may include internal and lateral community members but communication and data/feedback are often unidirectional or does not include all levels of the learning system.</td>
<td>Engages rarely in inquiry and reflective dialog for analysis and decision-making surrounding project goals and outcomes with university/community partner.</td>
<td>Lacks inquiry and reflective dialog for analysis and decision-making with university/community partner; there is no data feedback system in place.</td>
<td></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Knowledge</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supports a culture of sustainable learning in the partnership and in the partners’ organizational structures related to the related to the project purposes and measureable goals (e.g. PLCs) that builds a shared professional knowledge base for improving teaching, leading, learning, and guiding the project.</td>
<td>Engages in working together that is knowledge and learning centered but lack structures/processes for distributed learning systems. (PLCs are grade level only).</td>
<td>Focuses on management and operations without the reflective and communicative systems that could build opportunities for professional learning from implementation.</td>
<td>Lacks systems in place for building a professional knowledge base for improving teaching, leading, and learning as part of enacting the project.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**STRUCTURES:** Develop and employ **structures** and processes that support sustained purposeful learning at all levels of the system that:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Learning System</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilizes structures and processes for systemic improve- ment including: (1) necessary resources (2) effective communication and decision making processes (3) on-going relevant professional development (e.g. PLC), (4) specific measurable prioritized goals that are monitored at several levels of the system (5) and time-lines for assessment, data collection and analysis and feed-back mechanisms for adjustments to the learning system.</td>
<td>Moves towards systemic implementation, with the needed resources, communication structures, professional development (e.g. PLC), monitoring, timelines and data feedback systems used periodically by stakeholders for improvement of teaching and learning.</td>
<td>Provide sporadic opportunities to build a learning organization focused on the project goals and objectives. Lack of explicit ongoing communication structures contribute to district fragmentation. Some schools may be at higher levels than others but there is no district-wide operational structure.</td>
<td>Create no explicit structures or agreements for purposeful collaboration based on shared goals; each school and/or classroom works in isolation and there are inconsistent messages, a lack of resources and professional support to realize the project goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| University as Learning Partners | Engage honestly in the partnership through a shared commitment to the project, expertise, respect and credibility, and support to sustain the work required in the project and build viable learning partner- ships for future work together. | Develops partnerships through intermittent efforts to provide modest support but there is a lack of consistency in the commitment to the project and partnership. | Provides periodic support to the project and this creates mistrust due to unreliable nature of the efforts and actions of the team involved in the project. | Lack of responsibility, commitment, expertise or infrastructure to support the project. Not a partnership. |

| Shared Leadership | Engages in ongoing- shared leadership and decision making, which includes all key stakeholders, opportunities for equitable voice and shared negotiated responsibility based on collective measureable goals. | Engages in leadership that is distributed unevenly throughout the partnership. Some stakeholder voices are used for input and decision-making, but not all. Not everyone has agreed to the project goals and action plan. | Engages in leadership that is primarily autocratic and does not utilize stakeholder’s voices or input for decision-making. Only some agree to project goals. | Possesses leadership that is top down, or bottom up, and there is no on-going relationships between the levels of the system to support a collaborative partnership. |

| Purposeful Collaboration | Utilizes strengths, abilities and motivation of individual, social, and structural elements within the defined partnership with shared values to build a culture for purposeful ongoing collaborative learning. Broad commitment to improving the partnership through shared learning. | Provides frequent opportunities for collaboration between partners focused on project goals and support for common but limited participation, communication, and collaboration in sustaining the vision, goals and commitments of the project. | Accepts inconsistency in shared values and commitment to the project goals. Conducts periodic meetings that are not clearly connected to the larger shared project goals and implementation. | Lacks shared values and purposeful commitment for both the partnership and commitment. |
**PROCESSES & PRACTICE:** The District/University Partnership participants develop **processes** and **practice** that:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readiness for Change</td>
<td>Utilizes a readiness for change, belief surveys and or needs assessments to determine how to strategically engage in the project and build a competent partnership.</td>
<td>Makes use of readiness for change or needs assessments to determine the current &quot;state&quot; of the partners and decide on next steps regarding the project and partnership.</td>
<td>Determines that there is a need to do things differently but there is a lack of data or commitment for collaborative change by both partners in the project.</td>
<td>Lacks understanding of the initial state of the partnership; stakeholders are not ready to collaborate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Processes</td>
<td>Utilizes a structure and process to collect, analyze, and share data in a systemic way that is understood and useful to make informed decisions (e.g. measure effectiveness of decisions, use of protocols, uses of teaching/leading practices and student learning).</td>
<td>Develops a way to gather and analyze data but the data are not provided in a systematic consistent manner that has the potential to improve learning.</td>
<td>Allows access to data but because the system is fragmented it is not useful for decision-making to improve teaching, leading and learning.</td>
<td>Lacks a structure or data process to make informed decisions to improve teaching, leading and learning.</td>
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<td>Learning cycle</td>
<td>Implements data findings to support continuous learning (i.e. a learning cycle that is understood by stakeholders and useful to support learning (Plan Do, Study Act; PDSA).</td>
<td>Builds the expertise to use the data findings in a learning cycle that is understood by all stakeholders but the process does not impact students’ learning at the classroom level.</td>
<td>Shares data but data is often misinterpreted by some of the stakeholders, therefore does not support a cohesive learning cycle.</td>
<td>Lacks data that is useful to support a learning cycle.</td>
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<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Uses an explicit formative assessment process with specific benchmark checkpoints to assess progress on both the partnership and project goals and expected outcomes.</td>
<td>Analyzes progress through periodic formative assessment checkpoints to assess the partnership and project goals; including participation by diverse stakeholders.</td>
<td>Uses formative assessments infrequently to measure the progress towards partnership and project goals; lack of participation by diverse stakeholders.</td>
<td>Lacks ongoing processes or focused efforts to measure growth towards shared goals.</td>
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**RESEARCH/TOOLS:** The University/Public Schools Partnership participants have **Research/Tools** that:

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Embed research for professional learning to connect research and practice (action research, formal research projects, study groups etc.): the research stays at the classroom level and does not reach a broader community.

Conduct research activities in isolation that are limited in usefulness for improving practice.

Lack connections between research and practice.
REFERENCES


Scaling up Mathematics Achievement. (2007). National Science Foundation. Award Number 0733690.


TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RTI IN A MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Pauline Staski, M.A.
Amber Perry, M.A.
Brady Reno, B.A.
New Mexico State University

ABSTRACT

The following presents the perspectives of three middle school educators and one university collaborator on the implementation of a Response to Intervention (RtI) plan. The plan was implemented during the 2009-2010 year in a school where 90% of the parents report speaking Spanish at home. This article explores the individual educators’ perceptions of the challenges they faced and the solutions they developed in implementing a systematic, school-wide program aimed at meeting each student’s educational needs. The most significant finding was all educators stressed the need for flexibility of scheduling and time for educators to communicate with team members.

Nationwide, schools are looking at new ways to serve students who are not acquiring skills at the same pace as peers. Nowhere is this challenge more critical than in addressing the needs of students who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and for student who have disabilities. One method that has come under discussion is the Response to Intervention (RtI) model. The New Mexico Public Education Department (2010) defines RtI as a framework designed to improve student performance by providing research-based instruction, monitoring student performance and using that information to implement instructional changes.

In New Mexico, the RtI framework generally consists of a three-tier, problem-solving model that uses a set of increasingly intensive academic and/or behavioral supports based on the data resulting from monitoring students’ responses to the interventions. One goal of RtI is that each student will receive instruction based on where he/she is functioning. This necessitates several tiers of instruction, with the general classroom being the first tier. The next tier involves supplemental instruction to small groups in areas of weakness. There may be several tiers, with each tier becoming more intensive and focused on the student’s individual needs. The final tier is for students who require the specialized services of a special educator.

Currently there are few reports of RtI from the educators’ perspectives. Most extant reports are doctoral dissertations or master theses with a limited circulation (Dulhaney, 2010; Francis, 2009; Swigart, 2009). One exception to this trend is a report by Nunn, Jantz and Butikofer (2009). They explored the concurrent validity of teacher self-reports of efficacy with RtI implementation. The results of the Nunn et al study indicated that increases in teacher efficacy were related to perceived improvements in interventions, decisions-making and the team process. While useful, teacher self-reports of efficacy do not allow one to explore how RtI works from the educators’ perspectives. The focus of this article is to explore, from the educators’ perspective, what factors contributed to developing a successful RtI program.

This article reports on a discussion between two middle school teachers and their principal about how the RtI process is working in their school. The school serves 330 students from a predominately Spanish-speaking background. The district website indicates that 49% of students at the school are English Language Learners, but 90% of the parents who have children in the school report speaking Spanish at home. For the last several years, the school has failed to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act. The principal, who is in her second year at this school, enlisted the support of the faculty and began a school restructuring program last summer, of which RtI is a key component. Mid-year results indicated the students were showing a faster rate of learning than they had previously.
By February of 2010, the mean score in reading for sixth grade students indicated they had increases two grade levels from where it had been in August 2009. The mean score for seventh and eighth graders increased by one year.

A discussion was held with the university collaborator, the principal, the Title 1 reading teacher and a sixth grade language arts teacher as they reflected on how RtI is being implemented in their school and why it appears to be successful. Several themes emerged from the discussion. One of the most critical was that both the teachers and the principal saw that there was a need for a transition between the expectations of elementary school and those of middle school. They also indicated that the transition needed to be carefully planned out, with intermediate steps along the way. Summaries of comments made by the principal, a sixth grade teacher, a Title I teacher and the University collaborator are offered below.

**Principal:** Last year, what I saw was that secondary content teachers have no training in reading and elementary teachers have not enough foundation in the content to create that link. So there is this huge disconnect between fifth and sixth grade, where you’re reading narrative in elementary, and you’re still working a lot on the process of reading and then you hit sixth grade and all of a sudden you’re reading for information. Very little is narrative. Even the nonfiction in elementary is narrative. Sixth grade is where they hit this wall, where there’s a lot of non-narrative non-fiction…It was really a sink or swim for kids.

**Sixth grade teacher:** We came in over the summer and she (the principal) gave us a very clear view of where the kids needed to be at the end of the year. She understands that there needs to be transition from elementary school to middle school. We did a lot of backwards planning—we introduced us to several different strategies to get us where we needed to be going. I think in the past there has been such a disconnect between fifth grade elementary and sixth grade middle school. Because the Title I teacher and I had been at the elementary school last year, we had a good idea of where the kids had come from and the principal knew where we needed to go. So, I think this year it’s been a little easier to the kids.

**Principal:** The school is in restructuring this year, so I used a used a grant for that restructuring to pay for teachers to come in one day per month throughout the summer vacation. Some came in every time, some came in a few times, but all were encouraged and invited to come each time. The instruction I gave to the teachers was that they needed to develop a final exam that they would give as a pretest and as a midterm, that final exam should be focused on the critical learning that the kids had to have for the next grade. Once the teachers had those two pieces done, they should look at intermediary assessments. The model we used initially was from L to J which refers to the shape of the curve. So if you give a test at the beginning of the year, you expect to see high numbers of student with very low scores, at the middle of the year, you expect to see a very normal distribution, at the end of the year you expect to see high numbers of students with high scores—which is a J shaped curve. Sometimes there was an entire department there and they would have conversations about what this would look like. For example, each grade has a standard about narrative, but what needs to be in the narrative changes by grade. So, the sixth grade would talk about what narrative should look like in sixth grade. These discussions, which started this summer, are continuing throughout the school year. It’s not easy understanding what a narrative looks like in sixth grade, and then you have to ask what does a student produce to make the narrative look this way? So we began the work this summer and have continued it all year long. By the end of this year, we will revise and refine and not only have a year-end test, but will have benchmarked quarterly assessments which will cover nine weeks of material. That’s the backward planning process that I introduced for the content area teachers. Now the process that I had for the Title I program was different and was based more on the RtI model. One thing I asked her to do was to test everybody in Dibbles DRA, specifically the kids who were at Beginning Steps in reading Proficiency. From that, we were able to identify who were the kids who were most at risk. And that’s the basis of the Title I program. And then we looked at what were the interventions we needed for the kids who weren’t in this lowest group, but who were functioning lower than their classmates. That’s when we created the intervention period, those interventions were on-going based on what we saw in kids.
Comments from the individuals targeted in the previous section are extended below in their reflections on RtI, its definition, purpose, and characteristics. Following are those themes and summaries.

**RtI Defined**

**Principal:** The way I envisioned it was that teachers would teach and then they would assess. As they went over the assessment results, they would see how many students understood what they taught. If 80% got it, then the remaining 20% would need some kind of intervention, while the 80% would need to move on. The 20% would need to move on as well, but they need some kind of intervention so that they could get caught up on what they missed. So we created a period to do that for the seventh and eight grade. Because we have a period for guided reading for sixth, we didn’t really create a period for intervention for sixth. The sixth grade teachers came up with another way of doing that and I’ll let the sixth grade teacher describe that process. You’ve that group that are interventions, because that’s still within the classroom teacher’s control. But you’ve also got Title I doing the assessments to look at the kids who are scoring very low in their reading. To identify those kids, we looked at last year’s standardized testing and focused on the kids who were at Beginning Steps (pre-reading and beginning reading). Then, the Title I teacher assessed the skills of those kids more closely, using Dibbles DRA. This way, we could go back and look at exactly where the problems were. So, in my mind, what they call Tier I is the classroom teacher. What we call Tier 1 1/2, is where the interventions are by the classroom teacher during the intervention period and then Tier 2, is the Title I program. As we went on, we also identified some kids who had something much bigger, maybe a processing deficit or dyslexia, who were referred to special ed. What I found incredibly wonderful and rewarding about this process is we’ve identified two students as possible dyslexics, which we would not have caught had we not been through this process. And now we’re working on making sure that we can meet their needs.

**Title I teacher:** Tier Two is really my curriculum. The RtI we’ve set up, is basically we test them to figure out exactly what they need to become successful. When they come in to see me, they get individual work. So one might be working on fluency and comprehension, while another might be only working on comprehension because she doesn’t need fluency; she reads fast but she doesn’t comprehend what she’s reading. So, that’s pretty much what I do in here all day is RtI. I can tell the kids feel comfortable because they know that what they’re working on in here is going to help them. It’s like a prescription, you are assessed to find out where the weakness is and then you’re going to get this and this and this, based on the assessment. I monitor progress and if it works, we’ll keep on going and if it doesn’t then I switch it up a little bit.

**RtI as a Fluid Process**

Another theme that emerged from the discussion is that the way RtI works in this school is as a very flexible and constantly changing.

**Principal:** One of things I’m so impressed with the way this is working, is that this is very fluid process. Once the kids make gains in the Title I program, they can go back to their elective or back to something more enriching. For none of these kids is this a life sentence, it’s not even a year sentence.

**Title I teacher:** Sometimes I let them go out for while because they’ve made such gains while they’re still two or more level below grade level. I will pull them back. I just had two kids from each grade that I exited. And I had one more from each grade that I could have exited, but they decided they wanted to stay and keep working. I thought, you know that’s pretty cool that they’re taking responsibility for their own learning and they can see that this is helping them.

**University collaborator:** As a school, you have to choose where to put your resources. And I know it wasn’t initially clear who should be receiving the Title I services; are you going to spend the bulk of your resources on the few kids who are very low or are you going to spend more time on the students who are slightly low or try to identify everybody who is low and are you trying to get everybody.

**Title I teacher:** I feel like there’s a gap in skills that I’m trying to fill. For some of the Beginning Steps children (students who score at the primer level), they’re very low and I’m probably not going to catch them all the way up to grade level.
For some of the other children, just a little help may get them performing where they can succeed in the classroom. Some people would say to focus on that group, to pull them up and get them proficient. But I’ve always had a hard time when looking at the really low kids and thinking what about them? No, it’s not fair to leave them behind, we have to help them.

Sixth grade teacher: I was going to comment on the RtI and the on-going struggle to decide who do we focus on for intervention. That’s one thing I really like about the way we’ve implemented RtI here at our school. I think the most beneficial thing is the flexibility. Once they’ve been exited from the Title 1 program, they come to me and I’m the next step and then there’s another step. But the good thing is that the steps are so fluid, so if we have a kid and we move onto something that they’re really having trouble with, I can send them back. Or if she sees some progress, she can send them to me. And that’s kind of what we’ve done with our classroom interventions. I know if they need it, I can send them back to Title I. Have we had any go back?

Title I teacher: Not with sixth grade, but I’m in constant contact with the seventh and eighth grade classroom teachers and pretty much every four to nine weeks, I go back and check. And even if I exited you in November, I still go back in December and DRA (assessment). I’ll go to the teachers: and find out if he’s playing around or if he’s struggling and needs help.

Sixth grade teacher: The sixth grade doesn’t have an intervention block but it worked out that the kids that often need extra help are the kids I have during the guided reading block. So some of those kids are getting an hour with Title 1, then an hour with Mrs. M (the English as a Second Language teacher), then an hour with me for language arts plus an hour of guided reading. Then during my advisory time, I will take my targeted intervention kids and work in small groups. And the group changes, it changes constantly. And the other teachers work with me. I have children assigned to me during the hour, but the team I work with is wonderful and we are swapping kids back and forth. We have a teacher who does wonderful enrichment activities so sometimes when kids are doing well, they go to her to get that experience.

Principal: Seventh and eighth grades have an hour of language arts, then an hour first thing in the morning that we are calling our intervention period, that they will get targeted intervention by different teachers. It’s not always the language arts teacher, for example my social studies teachers are really working with them on constructing good short essay responses. What happens in sixth grade is a little different and that’s because of the availability of curriculum for that grade that we just don’t have for the other grades.

Sixth grade teacher: It’s worked out great, because of the flexibility. The kids we have in our tier 1 1/2 are different depending on the skill we are focusing on. One week it may be the beginning step kids, then the next week it may be two beginning step kids and three advanced kids and a couple of kids who are proficient. It’s just kids who are struggling with the same activity. That’s probably my favorite part of RtI is that we have the flexibility as teachers to look at the data and say ‘this is what’s going on, this is what we know about our students and this is what we need to do to fix it. Okay now we’ve fixed it, onto the next.’ It really makes things run a lot smoother, we know what’s going on, we have the data to back it up and we know how to make it better. I think it’s helped a lot of kids this year.

It all goes back to the backwards planning. For example, we’ve all worked on the writing process this year across the language arts department. We’ve targeted this because when we looked at the state data from last year, our kids were really lacking in the writing process. I’ll take a small portion of it for an example: The planning and preplanning your writing. I had an idea of what proficient should look like, so I’ve based all my planning on what the students need to get there. So every activity I assessed, I could look at and say 75% were ready to go onto the next step. The remainder of this group needs a little more help on this task, they’re not there yet. So, during the regular class time, I’m moving onto the next step. But for that small group, I would pull them during advisory time, so I work with them on that activity until I was confident they had enough of a foundation in that task. There’s no really straight lines. I have this group here and I have this group here and this group here and we’re all working on different things but we’re all moving forward. With the flexibility of our reading and our advisory, it’s allowed us to differentiate instruction to exactly what the student needs.
Principal: All the teachers work very professionally in this I could not micro-manage this without having the staff who professional enough to have the three-minute conversation.

**RtI as a Means for Empowering Students and Staff**

University collaborator: to what do you attribute the gains made this year?

Title I teacher: I would say the administration has so much respect for us and gives us the flexibility. It’s not a dictatorship. It’s very circular—if the principal thinks it, we’ll all come around. I might think I heard someone say “what do you think about that?” It’s very circular, everyone really tried to show respect for other people. I can honestly tell you, that we’re all working together to see improvement in our kids. We get to use our heart and our heads here because we can know we need to something this way for this child.

Sixth grade teacher: I think the reason our school’s making such progress is because the principal allows us to have ownership. She gives us direction, but she allows us to think. I’ve been in buildings where the principal says ‘I want your opinion on this,’ but then they go on about something totally different. She trusts us to take care of these kids and do what needs to be done, you’re going to have to step it up and do what needs to be done but I think its had an influence on the kids. They’re taking more ownership. I’ve noticed the students really putting more effort into their work I had the students last year in fifth grade and some of those students were done in 30 minutes. I would the atmosphere in the school has made the change. There’s no fear of messing up…I think a lot of times kids don’t try because they’re afraid of messing up … I think a lot of time teachers don’t try because they’re afraid of messing up…as long as we’re working hard and doing what we need to be doing for the students to succeed. I think it comes from the top down—the kids are comfortable and we all have some ownership.

University collaborator: What I’m hearing is that you felt it was necessary to have an environment where both teachers and students felt it was safe to take risks.

Principal: That’s been really important. This is my second year here and last year it was very hard to move people in that direction. We can’t learn if we don’t take risks. Too often, I’ve either been a student or been in a classroom where having the wrong answer was a bigger punishment than not participating. So, for kids in that situation, they do a cost-benefit analysis—every kid does. And they say, “you know what, I don’t need the put down…I don’t need the feeling stupid, I’ll just be quiet and stay out of it.”

Title I teacher: I’ve been in situations where the principal doesn’t really give you a lot of guidance and says “this is going to be your project, you guys do it,” then the teachers do it and take it back to the principal and “that’s not right and that’s not right and that’s not right.” Pretty soon, you just develop the attitude that “I’m going to wait, I’m not going to do a whole lot until I see someone else do it.” And then you get where you’re not as productive; your classroom is not as productive…you’re kind of afraid to make a move. And I can see where if I’m afraid to make a move, then my children are going to be afraid to make a move. As the Title teacher said, I think we’re a circle here. I think every school is a circle and it starts with the administration and goes to the teachers and gets to the kids and continues to come back around. But the administrators starts the circle and if the circle is started where “these are the rules and there would be no flexibility and this is going to be what I say even though I know you’re in the classroom all day with the kids then that’s what circles around. I think here its “you can do this’ and that is what circles around. Then you have this motivation and this yearning to do the best you can. I think that’s what’s happening with the kids this year.

Sixth grade teacher: In other places, you hear from administrators that it’s important to differentiate instruction, but it’s not really allowed. There’s no time allowed, there’s so many restrictions.

Title I teacher: You have to go certain pace, you have to cover the curriculum.

Sixth grade teacher: They want you to do that, but you really don’t have the flexibility to do that.

Title I teacher: That’s one reason I came here. I feel like sometimes we act like we’re trying to put all children in a little box and put a little bow on top. And all teachers were supposed to be in the same little box…that’s just not how it works…kids learn differently, teachers teach differently.
What you need, I should be able to give to you, because I’m smart and I should be able to understand that what I give to you maybe isn’t the same as what I give to her.

**Respect is Key in the Process**

**Title I teacher:** That’s where the respect comes in a lot and where’s there is growth we can own it and be proud of it. Because she respects us enough to get it done and trusts us enough to do it. We all know that this school has seen a lot of hard times and we’re at point where the state will come in and shut you down. This year we really had to say “we’re going to get this ship into shape. These are things we need to do and we need to do it. A lot of the teachers are brand new—that’s our biggest expectation is the state—those mandates and what’s coming down on us and what’s going to happened if we don’t get things done. and what that looks like for our kids. but because of the atmosphere and environment and when we see the growth we really get to have ownership of it—the reward of doing a job well.

**Sixth grade teacher:** If you give your opinion I feel like you’re genuinely being listened to as a classroom teacher whose in there with those kids. Sometimes, it’s almost like it’s a procedure that they tell you in principal school that you need to get feedback from the teachers. Okay check that off from the list now onto what I want to do. you don’t feel valued then.

**Principal:** What these two ladies don’t realize, because they just came this year, is that between last May and this August about half of my core staff choose not to come back or I chose for them to not come back. I have very high expectations, one of them is I will not tolerate cruelty to children and part of cruelty is not educating them. You cannot be a teacher in this school and not teach or not pay attention to kids learning…I do follow up. I believe strongly that what gets monitored gets done. I look at teachers’ scores on the board and I notice if a child falls behind or if he’s doing really well and I’ll comment on it in the hallway and the message gets back to the teachers. For the teachers, it could be a very stressful environment, because I do walk into the class and look at their data, because all teachers post their results. I’m not looking expecting that the kids are all at 100%, I look to see that teachers are being reflective. I look to see that reflective piece—my conversations with teachers are often what do you think that happened? What do you think you should do now? Because that’s what thinking people do to get better. It’s okay to not be perfect and it’s okay to make mistakes but it’s not okay to say its okay. I think it took the weeding out process that happened last year to have the kind of staff where we’re all on the same page.

**The Importance of Communication Among Teachers in the Process**

Another theme that emerged from the discussion was the need for teachers to have time to communicate in order to develop this teamwork and to share expertise. Both the Title I teacher and the sixth grade reading teacher came from the elementary background, where they were taught how to teach reading. But that is not typical of all the middle school teachers.

**University collaborator:** How did you go about developing the skills in the faculty for reading and writing?

**Principal:** Some teachers, like these, came into the school with a strong background. In order to build capacity in content area teachers with regard to literacy, once a week there are department meetings. We have to tweak schedules to make this possible to get classes covered. What’s wonderful about the language arts department is both these teachers bring their expertise in regard to reading and then we also have the Spanish language arts teacher—they have discussions with the content-trained language arts teachers in the older grades. What I’ve seen just through those discussions is a change in one teacher who was very strongly secondary trained. I’m not sure the teacher is even aware of it, but I’ve seen the teaching evolve, based on the discussions with other teachers. In addition, during the daily grade level meetings, I hear discussions like, “you know we all have to have the kids write, how are you grading?” and then they start talking about rubrics and what they expect in an answer. What I’m beginning to see is that at the grade level that this is what a short answer should look like. When we started the year, we had no agreements. By Christmas, the whole staff agreed they were going to ensure that every answer will have capitals and punctuation. So now I have my science teachers monitoring capitals and punctuation. What gets monitored gets done. It’s not that the kids didn’t know how, but they didn’t think anybody cared if they did it.
Those are the kind of conversations that make a difference. You have to manipulate a schedule to make that happen. Sometimes you have to work with people in central office who may not have a clear understanding of what goes on in middle schools so they don’t have a clear understanding of the need for the two kinds of planning periods.

**Title I teacher:** I’m really impressed by the eighth grade team and how they are really focused on kids. We’re all doing a good job of working together, but they’ve taken it to another level where they’re saying, “look what going on with this kids, let’s get the parents in here.”

**University collaborator:** I think the general public does not understand that this kind of problem-solving cannot happen without a lot of talking.

**CONTROLLED CHAOS IN THE PROCESS**

The last theme that emerged during the discussion was that the need for flexibility can make the process appear very chaotic.

**Sixth grade teacher:** We had one child who was very active and one of the teachers suggested bringing in an exercise ball for him to sit on so now when its time from passing between classes, you see this student coming down the hall with his exercise ball and you hear teachers saying’ here’s a heads up and how’s doing today…it’s very chaotic for a few minutes. It makes my classes go so much more effectively just to have the few seconds of working things out before we get back to class. It just makes the whole day go so much smoother

**Principal:** We had classroom walk-through with other administrators and the comments were … “Well, I can see the works getting done, but it’s too chaotic and disorderly for me.” The bottom line for me is that learning is messy. We don’t learn in straight lines, we don’t all learn alike and we don’t all learn at the same pace. We’re not producing chairs here. We’re dealing with human beings. In order for any of this to really work, we need to build systems that are human. In summary, it appears that the educators felt empowered by this approach to meeting individual student needs. In order for this fluid process to function, all educators agreed on several conditions that they felt were vital. The first and perhaps most important, was teachers needed to be part of the solution, which meant that the administration needed to trust the teachers to problem-solve collaboratively. Thus, the time spent in the summer for the teachers to begin this process was a necessary beginning, but was insufficient to allow implementation. The second condition was that time for the teachers to communicate with each other on a daily basis had to be built into their schedules. Having all the teachers share a planning period with the grade-level team members allowed for much greater flexibility in the team’s ability to problem solve. The third condition was time needed to be built into the school day for intervention. The educators felt this intervention time was critical. Finally, the principal alluded to the fact that the students needed to be in an environment where it was safe to take risks; it appears that the same is true for the educators. In order for a fluid, team-based response to meeting each student’s educational needs, the teachers needed to be empowered to take risks as well.

**REFERENCES**


COLLABORATION, NETWORKING, OUTREACH, PARTNERSHIPS AND RESEARCH: OUTREACH FROM A COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Based on the need for outreach to border and rural school districts, New Mexico State University developed a structured program to respond to targeted educational issues. In this paper, the development and function of the Alliance for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning is discussed.

In 2006, the President of New Mexico State University (NMSU) created an initiative for “a university-wide extension program” (Martin, 2006, p.1). The specific need for outreach activities was addressed by Johnson (2004) in a report that noted “lower-achieving NM districts serve school populations with the highest concentrations of American Indian students, English Language Learners, and children in poverty…” (p.12). Based on the educational challenges that existed in the State, The Stan Fulton Chair for the Improvement of Border and Rural Schools was established in 2005 for the purpose of enhancing communication between NMSU and pre-kindergarten through 12th grade constituents in border and rural schools (Alliance, 2010, ¶1). A second response to the established needs arose from meetings between the Dean of NMSU’s College of Education, several area Superintendents, and numerous school and community partners whose interest was in improving the educational attainment of New Mexico students and their families. The outcome of these conversations was the development of a partnership between the College of Education at NMSU, 17 New Mexico schools districts and various educational partners. The pact was titled “The Alliance for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning” (the Alliance).

Following is a description of the functions of the Alliance as directed by the Stan Fulton Chair. The literature that supports that structure, it’s outreach projects, and its partnerships and collaboration are reviewed.

SUPPORTING LITERATURE

Keating and Sjoquist (2000) and Chjeckoway (1997) discuss four models of community outreach and partnership. Because NMSU had pre-existing outreach structures through the Extension Service and the development of an Office of Vice Provost for Outreach and Engagement, one of these models was most appropriate for NMSU - “using existing institutional structures to provide both incentives for faculty to engage in outreach and guidance for the outreach activity” (Keating & Sjoquist, p.143).

Manning (1983) noted that “an outreach program requires—in fact, demands—the active involvement of a Center’s faculty in both the planning and realizing of its objectives” (p.21). Based on this premise, the Alliance mission, vision, goals and objectives as well as Governance Guidelines, were established (Alliance, 2008). Acting on other recommendations from Manning, NMSU established Alliance Co-Chairs that included the Stan Fulton Chair for the Improvement of Border and Rural Schools and a school district representative. Additionally, an Alliance Program Coordinator was hired in an effort to “professionalize the position” (Manning, p.35).

OUTREACH PROJECTS

Research on rural education provided a starting point for developing meaningful outreach projects (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy & Dean, 2005). That information and feedback from school superintendents was consolidated into the following themes (Arnold et al., ¶13-21):

- Instruction
- School safety and discipline
- Factors influencing academic achievement
- Educational leadership
- Teacher preparation and professional development
In an effort to provide the resources to support the Alliance activities, the New Mexico legislature awarded NMSU funding for staffing and projects. Part of the legislature’s rationale for this support came from the Why Rural Matter’s 2009 report which stated:

New Mexico has the 5th highest rural education priority ranking among the 50 states. The student population has the nation’s highest rates of rural minority students (more than 8 in 10 students), rural English Language Learners (more than one in three), and rural students in poverty (more than 8 in 10). Instructional spending is low relative to transportation spending, and there are significant inequities in the distribution of state and local funding. Fewer than 6 in 10 rural students graduate from high school, and NAEP scores are at the bottom. New Mexico’s concentrated poverty districts rank first in terms of urgency, with four of five indicators at or near the top (Johnson & Strange, 2009, p.63).

In his 2004 report to the State, Johnson noted, “Higher achieving school districts in NM benefit from higher teacher quality…programs to recruit and retain high quality teachers, and to provide high quality professional development opportunities for teachers, is essential. Professional Development opportunities that focus on cross-cultural teaching and learning is a recommendation that-while not directly supported by the data here-is more generally supported in the research literature on closing achievement gaps” (p.13). With direction from relevant research, its constituent school districts and political support, the Alliance created several specific projects that both addressed the need for enhanced educational opportunities in border and rural schools and targeted identified themes (e.g. the Assessment and Literacy Cadre, Scientifically Connected Communities, and Literacy Leaps).

**Partnerships and Collaboration**
In addition to the Alliance sponsored projects, regular regional/large group meetings with partners were held to review results of outreach activities and to identify continuing needs. For example, the group determined districts needed training in the Response to Intervention (Salvia, Ysseldyke & Bolt, 2010 Along with its partners in the NM Public Education Department, the Regional Education Laboratory-Southwest and the National Response-to-Intervention Technical Assistance Center, the Alliance has been able to co-sponsor and co-coordinate a yearly RTI workshop/conference. It is through such partnerships that the Alliance can provide research-based assistance. Other examples of the Alliance’s response to district need include workshops on school-age suicide – prevention and intervention, and consultation on the effects of immigration on children, families and schools.

The shared vision of the Alliance and its member school districts and agencies has resulted in increased communication and shared knowledge among partners. The Alliance’s model of Collaboration, Networking, Outreach and Research provides a basis for the provision and documentation of best practices in area border and rural schools.

**REFERENCES**


The percentage of the students in the public schools who are English Language Learners is increasing at a dramatic rate. There has not been a corresponding increase in the number of bilingual school psychologists, diagnosticians, speech-language pathologists who are called upon to assess students. One solution that is often employed is the use of interpreters. In many cases, neither the interpreter nor the evaluator has any training in the interpretive process. This article presents the rationale for training interpreters and outlines the basics for the training.

There is no question that the face of America is changing. Estimates show that Hispanics comprised 16.4% of the population, followed by African-Americans 12.8%, Asians, 4.4%, Native Americans, 1% and people with more than one race, 1.6% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). In 2008, four states were listed as having a majority of residents who were non-white, Hawaii (75 percent), New Mexico (58 percent), California (58 percent), and Texas (53 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). New Mexico, California and Texas are states with large Spanish-speaking populations. The southern regions of California, Arizona and Texas lie along the Mexican border and southern New Mexico is 50 miles from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Because of the dominance of the Spanish language in these border states, there is a crucial need for professionals to be familiar with the culture and language of the Hispanic and Mexican people in these areas.

Unfortunately, the majority of educators and evaluators are not Spanish speakers and cannot provide their services in the language of their students, clients or patients. Ideally, there would be sufficient bilingual audiologists, diagnosticians, school psychologists, and speech-language pathologists to conduct assessments in all the languages needed. However, there are insufficient numbers of bilingual professionals to conduct these evaluations. For example, while the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) lists a membership of over 25,000, only 325 are listed on the directory of Spanish-speaking members (NASP, 2010). Nor do the numbers show much improvement for speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists. While there were 11,800 certified audiologists in 2008, only 532 of them are currently listed as Spanish-speakers and of the over 115,000 certified SLPs in 2008, only 1623 are listed as fluent Spanish speakers (ASHA, 2008, 2010). In the border states of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, where there are large numbers of English Language Learners in the schools, the situation is particularly dire. For example, the NASP listing of Spanish-speaking school psychologists in border region states are: Arizona, 15; New Mexico, 4, and Texas 22 (NASP, 2010). The ASHA listing of Spanish-speaking audiologists in the same states is 94, while for SLPs its 245 (ASHA, 2010). Clearly, there are insufficient bilingual evaluators to meet the needs of the native Spanish-speakers in the border region. When a bilingual evaluator is not available, the alternative is to conduct the assessment using an interpreter.

The burden of care falls on the professional who must develop the cultural and linguistic competence needed or arrange to use cultural informants or interpreters during the evaluation, while interacting with families and possibly during treatment. Since a significant number of professionals have no formal training in working with an interpreter, they are unlikely to understand the problems that may arise when conducting an assessment through an interpreter. Some of these difficulties may involve inaccurate transmittal of information, the interpreter inadvertently providing additional cues or the lack of equivalent vocabulary/concepts being assessed (Sattler, 2001). Furthermore, since the evaluator doesn’t understand what is being said, it is difficult to monitor the interactions.
Therefore, one of the most important conditions necessary for a successful partnership of evaluator and interpreter involves ensuring that both receive some training in the task.

The need for interpreters in the provision of services to English Language Learners (ELLs) has been federally regulated for over forty years. The use of interpreters was first mandated in 1964 in Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act. Title 6 required the use of interpreters and translators for “LEPs” now referred to as ELLs. This was a requirement for all institutions that received federal funding. This ruling applies today to a large number of speech-language pathologists, audiologists, diagnosticians and school psychologists who provide services in educational settings and medical institutions that receive federal funding. Parallel to this regulation are the federal CLAS Standards (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services) 4, 5, 6, and 7 that mandated services for LEP individuals (US Department of Health, The Office of Minority Health, 2005). In addition, the language of the Individuals with Disability Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) requires that assessment of ELLs for any special education services be conducted in the student’s native language, and be conducted with culturally unbiased instrument(s). In fact, IDEIA 2004 stipulates that consent for any testing for special education be provided in the parent or guardian’s native language. Finally, IDEIA 2004 stipulates that all assessments for special education be conducted by “trained and knowledgeable personnel” (p. 46785). In the past, that language has been viewed as applying only to the professional conducting the evaluation, however, an excellent case can be made that the stipulation in IDEIA is meant to be applied to all individuals involved in the assessment, including the interpreter.

Mandates for the use of interpreters are especially important for Hispanic ELLs school children. As the Hispanic population has increased, there has been a resulting increase in the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the schools. In the 2005-2006 school-year, approximately 5 million ELL students were enrolled in pre-K through 12 which represented 10.3 % of the student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Besides the fact that the population is increasing, what about ethical and legal issues?

The evaluation of students from culturally and linguistically appropriate services should begin with the use of trained interpreters. Langdon and Cheng (2002) provided one of the first comprehensive introductions to the use of interpreters and translators in the field of communication disorders. Hwa-Frolich and Westby, (2003) also have provided an excellent review on using interpreters appropriately. In 2002, Paredes Scribner listed the following as guides for topics that should be addressed when working with interpreters for psychologists and diagnosticians: training in how to be an effective cultural consultant, legal mandates, terminology of assessment, and standard expectations of confidentiality and neutrality. Additionally, if the interpreter was expected to assist in obtaining and transcribing a language sample of informal literacy measure, the interpreter should receive additional training in these specific areas.

All evaluators, regardless of discipline, must receive training on ways to use interpreters appropriately as this is rarely a part of their academic training. After conducting a large-scale survey of school psychologists, Ochoa, González, Galarza and Guillemard (1996) reported that 77% of the psychologists who used interpreters had no training for the task. Nor is the problem limited to the evaluators’ lack of training in working with interpreters, the interpreters themselves are frequently not trained in interpretation. In the same survey, Ochoa et al found that only 37% of the interpreters working with the psychologists had training in interpreting. The most discouraging finding in the survey was that only 7% of the psychologist-interpreter dyads both had some training in interpretation. Based on these results, it appears that the evaluators who have no formal training in interpretation are often responsible for providing whatever limited instruction is given to the interpreters.

Evaluators should be aware that there is a National Council on Interpreters in Health Care that have established standards of practice (32 standards in nine areas) for interpreters in areas such as accuracy and confidentiality. An interpreter must develop skills that include: 1) good listening, 2) knowledge of specific vocabulary, 3) personal integrity, 4) patience, 5) understanding of clinical variation, 6) professional and personal integrity, 7) cultural variation, and 8) dynamics of interpreting.
Very few education or healthcare facilities will hire trained interpreters because of the cost and time involved in using an interpreter.

Generally, the interpreters used are family members or bilingual workers that are pulled from their regular positions to serve as interpreters. Part of the reason for the low compliance rate of employers hiring interpreters is that the federal legislation requiring interpreters is an unfunded mandate which has left the matter of how to pay for translation services a matter of dispute.

The process of interpreting is complex and the use of a trained interpreter should be given serious consideration. According to Kohnert (2008) the use of two languages is a cognitively demanding task and “neurologically intact bilinguals can functionally separate their two languages to speak only in L1 or only in L2” (p. 175) speaking in what is coined, the monolingual mode. However, bilingual speakers who use the bilingual mode appear to maintain both languages in a steady state, so although the individual is speaking in one language, the second language has not been completely deactivated and can come into play at any time. This type of code switching is seen in the fluent interpreters and is natural. The transference of two languages between two individuals is the basis of interpreting and cannot be oversimplified or dismissed as a task that can occur without training. Isaac (2001) describes the differences between the processes of “literal interpretation” and “complete interpretation” (pp 111-112). Literal interpretation is the basic process of decoding and encoding of a message. The focus is on the words alone and can result in humorous misinterpretations that can have disastrous results in professional settings. Complete interpretation depicts the influences of culture on language whereby the message passes through a cultural medium before it is translated. The cultural medium is the interpreter who adds a cultural influence to the linguistic message. This is the basis of support for requiring the use of an interpreter that is both bilingual and bicultural. The interpreter simply becomes a bilingual tape recorder when the cultural component is missing. Selection of an appropriate interpreter requires that the professional develop a set of knowledge and skills that can be used when selecting the interpreter. The professional may want to know if the interpreter 1) will remain neutral, 2) has bias’, 3) has the language skill needed, 4) is knowledgeable of the culture, 5) is knowledgeable of the discipline, 6) will affect social or family roles by their presence, or 6) can identify potential problems. The professional should have time to educate the interpreter on the session’s purpose and need, should be able to discuss interpreting styles with the interpreter, should be able to flag potential problems for the interpreter, and should be able to explain professional terms that may be unfamiliar to the interpreter.

A trained interpreter also can help the professional avoid both medical and educational errors. A study by Caesar and Kohler (2007) revealed that speech language pathologists overestimated students’ L2 proficiency and made erroneous conclusions that students were prepared for English-only testing. Nor is the need for careful evaluation limited to the speech-language pathologists. The most common reason why ELL children are referred to the pre-referral team is related to oral language issues (Ochoa, Robles-Pina, García & Breuning, 1999). This includes referral for possible psychoeducational testing. The appropriate use of an interpreter in the assessment process can provide more assurance of an appropriate diagnosis of the ELL’s language skills. Currently, best practices indicate evaluators will need to assess student’s skills in all languages he/she speaks. Because so few evaluators are fluent in more than one language, they will need to collaborate with an interpreter to conduct assessments in the student’s native language. In the case of Spanish, this collaboration will involve reviewing, discussing and possibly administering both informal and formal instruments with the interpreter.

A successful interpreter scenario requires the basic framework that includes the briefing, the interaction and the debriefing or BID. In the debriefing, the evaluator and the interpreter 1) Explain format (ground rules) of interview, 2) Explain purpose of interview, 3) Review critical pieces of information, 4) Review questions, and 5) Explain the type of interpreting (consecutive or simultaneous). This is an important aspect of the interpreting process that should not be overlooked and should be allotted sufficient time.

The body of the session whether it be the interview, treatment, or assessment period is termed the interaction triad which includes the professional, the interpreter and the student, client, patient and family members.
During the interaction, the evaluator and interpreter should maintain eye contact with the client and use language that is understandable to the client.

Other points of importance during the interaction are that a) the team presents itself as a unit, b) the environment is comfortable, c) attention is paid to nonverbal cues, d) the interpreter interprets clearly and precisely, e) the interpreter asks for clarification when necessary, f) the seating arrangement is appropriate, g) the evaluator introduces participants, h) the evaluator defines roles, i) the evaluator states purpose of interview, j) the interpreter use “I” instead of “Mr. X says”, and that k) the interpreter transmits everything said. The final piece of BID is the debriefing where both the professional and interpreter identify whether the interview was productive, if there were areas that went well, areas that did not go well and if there are any cultural aspects that should be clarified.

In addition to these critical pieces of the interpreter process, there must be very specific training of the pedagogy of assessment. There is great potential for cultural misunderstandings when professional jargon is used and when the interpreter must translate information in which she or he has little background. For example, the speech-language pathologist is relying on the interpreter to repeat the exact words of the student in a test of syntax where word order is being assessed. The interpreter must be true to the student’s words even if she detects that the response is incorrect. For example, if the clinician is testing for the use of “ing” and shows a picture of two little boys running, the child may say “los niños estan corer” this should be interpreted as “the little boys are run”. The interpreter should not correct the response. The evaluator should be aware that the interpreter may be inappropriately aligning with the child and wants them to do better. The level of trust between the interpreter and the evaluator must be high. The evaluator must trust the interpreter to provide information that will depict a valid assessment.

The evaluator who is planning an assessment session can discuss language assessment measure procedures with the interpreter. The test can be administered or interpreted in a non-standardized modified manner in the following way: 1) Use interpreter or translator to administer or score, 2) Test below and above basal and ceiling, 3) Reword task instructions, 4) Provide additional training items, 5) Provide additional feedback on performance, 6) Composite scoring, or 7) Describe modifications in written and oral reports.

The relationship between the evaluator and the interpreter should be a partnership. Both the professional and the interpreter should increase both their cultural competence (Battle, 2001; Salas-Provance, Erickson & Reed, 2003) and their skill in the process of interpreting (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Langdon, 2002a, Langdon, 2002b, Langdon & Cheng, 2002; & Langdon & Quintanar, 2003). The consequences for ELL children are serious when there is doubt about language competence and the assessment is completed by an unqualified professional. In the past, there has been evidence of ELL children being placed in special education programs in large numbers, because of a lack of understanding on the part of the professional about best practices for assessment of this population. Today, there are indications that the opposite is true, and ELL children are actually not being referred because of a fear of over-identifying ELL children in special education (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, Office of Special Education program, 2001). The result is that some ELL children who qualify for special education services will not be receiving the services they need to succeed in school. Neither over-identification nor under-identification are acceptable solutions (Kohnert, 2008). The burden is on the professionals to develop the skills necessary to provide the services that will lead to successful outcomes for all children in our schools.

REFERENCES


