

BOOK REVIEW

Reaching Out to Latino Families of English Language Learners

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Reaching Out to Latino Families of English Language Learners. By David Campos, Rocio Delgado, and Mary Esther Soto Huerta. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2011. Pp. 221. \$23.95 (paper); \$29.99 (e-book).

Reaching Out to Latino Families of English Language Learners provides strategies to increase school engagement and to broaden teacher perceptions of Latino parents and students. The book's framework is presented through a sociocultural theory of learning that focuses on promoting parental involvement. For Latino students to experience academic success, Campos et al. argue, schooling expectations need to be aligned with the students' linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds. The authors urge teachers first to become aware of their social positioning, explained as one's own "power and privilege in relation to others" (8). In this and in many other ways, *Reaching Out to Latino Families* builds upon and complements the work of earlier scholars such as Heath (1984) and Purcell-Gates (2004) because Campos et al. believe in the importance of bridging students' community and school-based literacy. Throughout the text the authors place the concern for social equity at the forefront of their argument as they urge teachers to begin with an introspective approach as a means to kick-start the process of understanding issues of diversity.

The book's initial chapters suggest that educators' sense of self and cultural awareness is vital for collaboration between the schools and Latino communities. For Campos et al., collaboration leads to an asset-

based approach in which teachers “acknowledge, respect, and integrate the knowledge that Latino parents possess and have shared with their children since birth—including their native language” (64). The asset-based model is pivotal for the remaining chapters that call for positive relationships within the school community. In these early chapters, as well as later chapters, the text attempts to make the reader aware that social and economic factors and socio-economic inequality are critical issues in education. The authors note that housing, access to educational experiences and materials, and health care nutrition are issues that can directly affect a child’s educational experience and opportunity for success.

By complementing the work of scholars such as Heath (1984) and Purcell-Gates (2004), Campos et al. argue successfully that literacy can bridge the learner’s community and school-based literacy to meaningfully serve in the learner’s everyday life. The more knowledgeable teachers are about their students’ familial experiences, the more capable they are of integrating students’ home and academic learning. The authors build upon two specific key instructional factors observed by Purcell-Gates and held by practitioners to improve literacy practice in students’ lives: (1) development of reading and writing with fluency and skill and; (2) the degree to which the materials and purposes for reading and writing them in classes match those found outside of school in the lives of the learners. The authors use Purcell-Gates’s instructional factors to support their belief that “[a]cquiring knowledge about the different cultures represented in your classroom and learning about individual students’ experiences helps you develop meaningful activities for your students”(67).

As educators of Mexican descent, Campos et al. use their own social location to offer readers a perspective with which to view Latino culture; in doing so they situate the need for an ethic of care within the sociopolitical and

sociocultural context of today's schools and communities. Their social location and first-hand teaching experiences allow them to offer insightful and creative ideas for connecting and effectively communicating with parents and students alike. In fact, the book contains an extensive appendix of words and phrases, letters to promote parent contact, homework expectations, and parental involvement templates in Spanish and English.

Campos et al.'s *Reaching Out to Latino Families of English Language Learners* can serve several purposes. The book can be used as 1) a college textbook for pre-service teachers; 2) a valuable tool for all teachers and administrators who work with and within the Latino community; and 3) a resource reference for parent/teacher organizations to use as a bridge between the school and Latino families. The book provides readers a framework in which to begin a collaborative journey with parents and teachers, enabling them to support students' schooling success. With practical suggestions and many resources, the authors leave no doubt that the academic success of Latino students is possible when educators partner with Latino communities.

References

- Brice Heath, S. 1983. *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
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- Purcell-Gates, V. 2004. *Print Literacy Development: Uniting Cognitive and Social Practice Theories*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.