



Minority Parents Should Know More about School Culture and Its Impact on Their Children's Education

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As a refugee child, I encountered many difficulties and challenges in the public schools. Today, a generation later, many, many children face the same problems. As a result, countless bilingual and limited-English-proficient students are lagging behind their peers. Minority students are being labeled and treated differently from their classmates. Although equally capable, they are receiving a second-class education. The reason is the hidden curriculum in the current American educational system.

What is a hidden curriculum? Posner (1995) defined a hidden curriculum as instructional norms and values not openly acknowledged by teachers or school officials. That curriculum generally is concerned with “issues of gender, class and race, and authority” as well as “which children can succeed at various kinds of knowledge” (Giroux & Purpel, 1983, cited in Posner, p.12). A hidden curriculum is also known as the informal or implicit curriculum.

Most people would not even think that schools could have hidden agendas. But there is something called “school culture,” which is a hegemonic value system under which schools operate. For instance, in 2005, the Education Trust-West studied the largest school districts in California and found that the schools serving black, Latino, and poor minority students spend

as estimated \$3,000 less per teacher. In other words, these schools only recruit underpaid, less experienced, and newer teachers to teach minority students.

Parents usually think that the American public education system is so wonderful when they learn that their students are getting “As” or “Bs” and have perfect citizenship marks. Most parents, especially bilingual, immigrant, and refugee parents, do not ask about the curriculum or the instructional schemes the teachers use. Parents tend to be more concerned about the grades and behaviors of their children than what or how they are learning. In some cultures, receiving good grades means every thing to students, their families, and their parents. For the most part, parents trust teachers and highly respect them as authority figures.

However, for far too many children, having good grades does not mean that students know how to read and write or that they have mastered any content knowledge or academic skills needed for success. This academic deficiency is due to a hidden curriculum that parents need to be aware of if their children are to succeed in school academically. Parents should keep in mind that academic grades must reflect the quality of education that their children received; otherwise, receiving good grades is part of the covert social promotion used by schools that will inhibit minority students’ academic potential in the future.

Sheltered Instruction Is a Curricular By-Product

The hidden curriculum is an underlying agenda that affects students of low socioeconomic status, particularly language-minority students. It is based on the attitude that non-English-speaking students are not capable of the same academic achievement as native speakers. English language learners (ELLs)—students whose first language is not English—are classified as either limited-English-proficient (LEP) or fluent-English-proficient (FEP). LEP students are generally placed in bilingual classrooms and FEP students in regular courses of studies.

The 1974 case of *Lau v. Nicholas* established the premise that public schools should give non-native students extra assistance to help them excel in school. But the court did not specify what public schools should do to help English language learners excel academically. Public schools, faced with the challenge of teaching ELL students, developed the LEP curricula.

Today’s LEP curricula conform to legal mandates, but the implementation of curricular programs is somewhat capricious. Proposition 227, “English Only Instruction,” has neither proved or disproved English proficiency of ELL students, nor has there been a development of methods and sensible programs to assist teachers in teaching English to ELL students to narrow the gap.

The result is that minority students too often are taught low content and given materials that do not meet state standards

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for content knowledge. Many LEP students are not at grade level, based on the tracking scales used by school districts, and score poorly on the academic performance index. The academic performance index scores of ELL students are in the bottom quartile in all tested areas.

More often than not, the curriculum for ELL students is watered down in the public schools. ELL students are not being taught the same ways as others with the same curriculum. Teachers teach bilingual students survival and social skills, drilling them on less important academic tasks that are not related to the operational curricula.

The grades in bilingual classrooms are therefore not indicative of the same academic quality as the grades in regular classrooms. Even if the curricula in bilingual classes are similar to the curricula in regular classes, the academic quality of the instruction is usually different. For instance, LEP students are graded well if they can read, but other students must demonstrate that they comprehend what they read. There is a difference between reading comprehension and the ability to read. ELL students' grades do not reflect the inferior quality of the academics they receive.

The inferior quality of ELL education is compounded by the fact that the hidden curriculum is present in the hiring process. Schools with high minority populations tend to hire less qualified teachers to teach the students who are less proficient in English. The instructional approaches may be the same as for other students, but the content is lower and the quality of education is poorer, using content-compatibility rather than content-obligatory.

Many public schools do not seem to be bothered that some students receive a poor education in their institutions. For instance, school districts with a large number of ELLs tend to use temporary grants to hire teachers who are only pink-slipped to fill the classrooms where most minority students are enrolled. This is because the hidden curriculum trains these students to fill the lower positions in the social order. They are not expected to pursue higher education or to aspire to high-paying professions. Some schools are satisfied if second-language students simply meet the minimum requirements for graduation. The academic future of these students is not being considered, since they are perceived to be non-college bound.

To overcome the challenge, a number of ELLs have to ignore their bilingual designation and related academic problems and go straight to regular courses of studies. Some sink and others swim. A few good students survive the submersion

process, sometimes called the saturation model, which immerses them in a regular course of studies without providing primary-language assistance. To do this, these students must start nearly their entire education all over. It is a difficult process, but it is often worthwhile. The majority, however, are stuck in bilingual classes for their entire school experience, which often is longer than expected.

The Results of Academic Inadequacy Are Looming

Posner (1995) noted that "the hidden curriculum . . . may have a deeper and more durable impact on students than either the official or the operational curriculum" (p.11-12). The hidden curriculum that sets language-minority students apart from others impedes their education and limits their potential. The content of their language curriculum consists of basic communication needed only for survival; it does not include the language development needed for academic tasks. LEP students are given an impoverished curriculum and improvised instruction. Segregation in public education was outlawed in 1954; however, unequal forms of instruction have created a legal form of segregation that minority children are facing each and every day.

Predictably, many ELL students fail in school. Passing the High School Exit Exam is extremely difficult; in some cases, it is impossible. Recent data indicate that the dropout rates for minority students are three times higher than for other students in the public schools. Most minority dropouts are teenage girls. Many juvenile offenders are minority males who do poorly in school. Furthermore, those who do complete high school are inadequately prepared for higher education.

There are different factors associated with failure in school; however, according to the Education Trust-West report, the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning found that students in the poorest schools are twice as likely to have teachers who aren't prepared as students in affluent schools. Moreover, the report also pointed out that students in schools with the highest number of minority students are five times more likely to have unprepared teachers.

As a result, academically, a student cannot apply to the University of California system with a GPA lower than 3.0. For the California State University system, a student's high-school GPA must be at least 2.5. Only the top 10% of minority students, including those classified as LEP and bilingual, are able to enter top-quality and

accredited universities each year. Even if they were admitted, a large number of these students are required to enroll in remediation courses (math and English) to improve their academic skills in those subjects.

The remaining students may go to two-year colleges or vocational schools or get low paying jobs. The majority of bilingual students who attempt higher education will pursue it in community colleges. Even there, statistics indicate, they are at greater risk of dropping out of college.

The number of under-prepared students will increase dramatically in the next decade if nothing is done at the high school and elementary levels to improve the quality of instruction. For instance, ELL students are now struggling to pass the high school exit exam; meanwhile they also need to score high enough on the SAT to qualify for college admission. To overcome this requirement is not easy for many of them because they were not taught in their classes to master what will be on such tests. Some are being excluded from graduation because they failed the exit exam not only once, but three or more times.

Keep in mind the fact that by the year 2020 jobs will require yet more education and higher degrees. This trend will tend to keep the minority and bilingual population out of the mainstream of American life if they are not provided quality educational curricula today. The limitations that schools are placing on LEP and bilingual students will negatively impact their employment and earnings potential, and most importantly college admission. If nothing is done to change the status quo, the hidden curriculum will be the hidden destiny for these students.

Why Academic Problems Persist between Parents and Children

Parents often do not become aware of their children's deficiencies until too late, when the problems have become nearly impossible to correct. Bilingual parents, even when paying close attention to the grades their children receive, generally find out only when their children reach junior high school and high school that they cannot read, write, speak, or understand English sufficiently to do well in school.

These children's verbal skills may in some cases be so limited that they cannot interpret simple statements in English for their parents. Moreover, their written ability is often so poor that they have no chance to enter, much less succeed, in college. Some teachers refer them to as shoddy English writers.

Should parents blame the victims or

the system? In most cases, children are being blamed for not learning enough. But the reality is that quality education is not being delivered to them in class.

However, the parents assume the students are responsible for the problem. They accuse their children of being lazy and dishonoring their parents with their failing grades, poor attendance, language deficiencies, and presumed learning disabilities. Some parents do not understand how their children could go from being straight "A" students in elementary school to "bad children" whose academic records changed overnight when they entered junior or senior high school.

The children cannot explain to their parents why they receive lowered or bad grades and why they cannot deal with homework or tests as they proceed through their education. Parents do not comprehend the problems associated with student learning, curricula, and grading systems because previously they have been told that their children are doing fine in class. Many parents themselves lack an academic background and a knowledge of educational institutions.

Some parents assume their children's school problems are related to gang affiliation and peer pressure. Others think their children are just playing games with them, not paying attention in class or taking an interest in school. Inevitably, tensions build between parents and children over the subject of academic grades and success in school.

Many bilingual parents come from cultures in which teachers receive the same respect as civic leaders and clergymen. These parents carry that mindset to this country, respecting school teachers and administrators as authority figures. They trust that teachers have great expertise, enabling them to educate their children to become productive citizens. They do not know the difference between substitute teachers and regular classroom teachers, nor can they tell when teachers have proper credentials. These parents do not understand academic standards. For many, the title *teacher* is revered. This belief system helps explain how bilingual children can continue to be treated inequitably by the educational system.

Some of these respected teachers tell parents that the results of standardized tests do not predict or indicate potential success or lack of success in students. They tell parents not to be concerned about test outcomes because such tests mean nothing to the teachers or the students. In fact, this is not true. Schools often hide the importance of test results from parents.

ELL students have few advocates in

the public schools. Their teachers do not think that such students will benefit from more instruction and attention. Their parents do not realize that they are falling farther behind every day because of the kind of education they receive each of those days. Parents do not know how to ask or advocate for equity of education for their children even as those students are drowning in school.

Schools encourage parents to be involved in their children's education, but many bilingual parents fear being misunderstood and therefore do not express their concerns if they have any. Some schools also label and seek to ignore vocal parents who fight for equity and equality. As a result, especially for parents, no one seems to recognize the harm done to ELL students by their inferior education until the "graduates" have a difficult time finding employment.

The Limited English Proficient Label Limits Minority Students' Academic Potential

The academic labels of ELL, LEP, and FEP are what permit the hidden curriculum to remain in place. Too often, the true purpose of the labels and the bilingual programs is not to help students academically, but rather to classify and track such students at the lower end of the academic program. The purpose is also to maintain these programs because they bring in government financing. Some schools use the fact that they have bilingual problems to request categorical funds.

As students progress from LEP to FEP status, the funding is reduced. Thus school administrators have a financial interest in keeping students designated as limited-English proficient as long as possible before allowing such students to prove they are capable and proficient in English academically. This requirement leaves many high school graduates classified as LEP even though their overall GPAs are 4.0. Schools are supposed to help students, but too often LEP students are being used to help schools.

Public schools now are applying the SAT9 (CAT6) scores in moving students from LEP to FEP status. The use of these test scores is a hurdle that many bilingual students cannot overcome. In order to be redesignated from LEP to FEP, a student has to score at or above the 36th percentile on the SAT9 in all tested areas: language arts, reading, and math. If students meet all other requirements but their SAT 9 scores are too low, they remain in the LEP designation regardless of their academic

achievement. This means that they must continue in the bilingual program with its inferior content, taking ELD or ESL classes in addition to the normal load.

The fact is that using test scores to maintain LEP designations is a way of trapping students in low-quality courses in order for the schools to obtain state and federal monies.

The situation must be changed before the deprivation of education becomes a lifetime disability. LEP students carry learning deficiencies throughout the entire span of their education and beyond. The hidden curriculum prejudices them and categorizes them as not as competent as their peers from the dominant culture. Schools too often tend to think of LEP students and their parents as illiterate individuals who deserve only limited opportunities.

In addition, ELL students have been discriminated against unconsciously because of their dialect, culture, and poor second-language skills that appear to color their learning and comprehension in the classroom. LEP students suffer not only from cultural biases, but also from the cultural aspects of the classroom and standardized tests that are used to place and assess them in the educational system.

The Biases in Tests Are Harmful and Provide Inaccurate Measures of Student Learning

As Simmons (1991) has observed, IQ tests and other tests often are culturally and economically biased. Some standardized language tests, for example, contain questions that are confusing to students whose first language is not English. Use of double negatives such as "none" of the following are true "except" or "all are false, except" make it difficult for LEP students to answer the question actually being asked. Some LEP students have not been exposed to such questions in bilingual class or they have not learned the grammatical meanings of the constructions.

The wording and contexts in which the questions are asked can be unfamiliar even to bilingual students who speak good or fluent English but lack test-taking experience. Generally, standardized tests use constructions and vocabularies that are not taught in ESL or ELD classrooms. Some LEP students may not be able to identify the meanings because they have not heard the words before.

Hoover & Taylor (1992) noted that about 34% of standardized language tests have language biases. This means that tests are based on the dominant cultural value system, which is different from that

of many if not most minority students. Moreover, instruments used to measure ELL students do not truly assess the academic skills, nor the oral and social skills needed for survival.

Some testing and assessment instruments are obsolete, unreliable, and in most part, invalid. As a matter of fact, the results do not pertain to the needs of the ELL students at all; however, schools use them as data to track students for growth. In many cases, schools do not follow through to perform the subsequent assessment or tests as required by law, thus leaving these students in the ditch to fend for themselves.

The *Negro Educational Review* (1987) pointed out that standardized tests are developed by groups of educators and community members. About 80% of these developers are White, 4% are Black, 1% is Asian, 4% are Hispanic, and the rest are from various other ethnic groups. Nearly 100% have at least a high school education, about 77% have college degrees, and 90% have graduate degrees or some educational experience beyond the bachelor's degree.

Thus, standardized test developers may well have no cultural understanding of many of the students whose abilities they are measuring. The test makers have absolutely nothing in common with a large portion of the test takers. This has caused serious concern about insensitivity in standardized testing. As I recall, a public outcry in 1994 called for the suspension of the CLASS testing due to cultural and language insensitivity.

The earliest tests designed for educational purposes were developed in the 1920s. These tests were developed with the support of educators and business corporations on the basis of the military alpha tests. The alpha tests measured values, morality, and job skills rather than general knowledge or academic skills. The tests were largely used for disciplinary purposes and social skills drills. They had very little to do with language development. These tests are not relevant to educational purposes. The content of the tests is racially, socially, and economically biased.

Most standardized tests reflect only one culture: the Anglo-Saxon or European culture. Test questions contain language or make assumptions that are totally foreign to the cultures of many students. For instance, a test might ask students to identify the action of a man in a picture, a man wearing a suit.

Different cultural experiences will elicit different answers. A middle-class White student may say, "This man is going to work." Another student, whose male role model does not wear a suit for work, may

respond, "The main is going to church." A picture of a high-rise building might be identified by some students as an office building and by others as a home. Students in rural areas may think that train tracks are for transportation of machinery and equipment whereas students in inner cities may think that train tracks are for transportation of people. Furthermore, if ELL students are asked to answer this question: House is made of what? The possible answers are: A. wood, B. steel, C. adobe, D. cement, or E. All the above.

The answers students give on tests are based on their cultural experiences. Students of different cultures have different experiences. Some researchers have found that students whose native language is not standard English do not have problems comprehending materials written in standard English when the curriculum in the classrooms reflects the students' experiences and the tests are sensitive to the students' cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately, this is often not the case with standardized testing.

The *Negro Educational Review* (1992) cited studies that showed that groups that are dominant in vernacular Black English scored significantly higher on academic assessment tests when they were tested on materials relevant to the cultural backgrounds of Blacks. This shows that equality in language testing is essential for accurate measurement of the academic abilities of minority students. The tests need to consider the cultural differences and academic backgrounds of students in order to accurately measure knowledge.

The *Negro Educational Review* (1992) also found discrimination against Blacks in six of seven language tests, discrimination against Latinos in two, and discrimination against Southerners in two. Many students are being tested with materials that are obsolete. The norm-references of the standardized language tests being used to assess bilingual students, especially refugee children, have no cultural or language values that are relevant to the students.

Hispanic and refugee children are being tested for language proficiency simply because they speak languages other than English at home. The criteria references can be interpreted in many ways. This means that students are being taught one way and tested in other ways. Too many schools seem not to want to deal with bilingual students' academic challenges, but to merely continue to give them a poor education.

Occasionally, LEP students are excluded from taking standardized language tests because they are presumed by school

personnel to be not proficient in English. Also, school administrators are often afraid that the lower scores of ELL students on standardized tests will hurt the school's claim to academic excellence. For this reason, schools find ways to exempt many LEP students from taking the tests. Schools are more concerned about the test results than the student learning and experience.

The hidden curriculum decides what is best for schools rather than what is best for students. Most parents are not fully informed of the reasons schools want to exclude or exempt their children from taking tests. In some cases, schools claim that high stakes tests are not relevant to ELL students' academic needs and they do not have to take the tests. In fact, schools predetermine that these students will score low, which will affect the overall scores of all students.

When students are excluded from taking the tests, they are housed in the cafeteria or some other specified room for non-academic activities, like watching Walt Disney movies, playing games, or completing their homework assignments. When parents confront school administrators for explanations, the response is that their hands are tied and they are only following orders from above.

The Cultural Mismatch Continues To Stall Learning

Hoover and Taylor (1992) observed that schools implement curricula and reach conclusions without any regard to students' culture and language. Society determines the "correct" language and culture. In the United States, English is the accepted language. In some states, English is the official language, and California is one of these states. However, there is no specific English-speaking culture. The melting pot concept that all cultures should assimilate into the English-speaking culture has not worked.

Today pluralism appears to be the accepted vision for our diverse society. People are not expected to assimilate, but to enrich others with their own style of speech, learning, thinking, and talking. Thus today's American culture is a hodgepodge of many cultures, traditions, and value systems.

Minority children, especially ELL children, have difficulty understanding what the majority culture is. Public schools are not allowed to teach cultural or religious values to students. Schoolteachers may have beliefs and backgrounds different from those of the majority, but they can express their views only implicitly, not

explicitly. For instance, I have heard of workshops that teach Caucasians about other races and cultures.

But I have not seen meetings or workshops that teach other races about European culture and traditions. I have not seen school teachers teach the values of the dominant culture to their students. People in the U.S. are taught about many cultures, but they are not taught about the English-speaking culture. Many LEP students do not have opportunity to learn the acceptable culture and language in school because the system fails to mainstream them from LEP to FEP. They are expected to conform to a culture and a language from which they are kept isolated.

I know from personal experience that going through the public school system is a difficult challenge for students, especially ELLs, whose culture is different from that of the majority. They have to deal with two cultures and two languages at the same time. But the larger part of their school day is spent in their native culture. In bilingual and dual immersion programs, children use their native language about 80% of the time and English only 20% of the time.

Although the educational goal for ELL students is to master the intricate English language in order to become proficient academically, the information is not being provided to parents so they can make an informed decision for their children. For instance, research shows that it will take 4-7 years for a non-native child to academically master English or to become proficient in English. On the other hand, research also indicates that being proficient in a language is not a sufficient condition for academic achievement, which means that every child has to learn how to read, write, and speak English.

Sometimes ELLs have services that help them. However, the primary criterion schools use to determine the level of academic support services that will be provided to LEP students is perceived ability. And the hidden curriculum has already determined that the academic ability of a LEP student is below that of other students.

The hidden curriculum is designed to take students who speak languages other than Standard American English and force them to abandon their style of speech and learning and conform to the "correct" language and culture. This curriculum does not recognize the value of having two cultures and two languages. Simmons (1991) recognized that trying to change people's lives in this coercive way creates a moral dilemma. Students come to school with speech and learning patterns taught to

them from birth. The style of speech and usage of grammar in their native language is something students identify with and it defines who they are. Schools do not realize that changing people's speech and learning style changes their cultural and personal identity.

Teacher Perceptions and Belief Systems Do Matter in the Classroom

The hidden curriculum pegs students who speak languages other than English as having lower intelligence (IQ) and as less likely to achieve in school. Kossak (1990) pointed out that teachers tend to assign lower grades to students who speak languages other than Standard American English. She also mentioned that teachers tend to respond more positively to higher achieving students, attractive students, female students, conforming students, and front-row students than students in minority groups who speak their native languages and sit in the back row.

The perceptions teachers hold of their students influence the students' behaviors, their academic development, and the outcomes of their tests. In 1991, a study conducted by the California Department of Teacher Education asked 52 second-grade teachers to listen to tapes of children who spoke Standard American English and minority dialects. Nearly all of the teachers who participated in the study were monolingual teachers, presumably White. They considered most of the students with minority dialects to be slow learners with low IQs and low reading scores. Their conclusions were based solely on listening to audiotapes.

Later, a similar study was conducted with minority teachers. These teachers rated the students with minority dialects significantly higher than the monolingual teachers did. The logical conclusion from these two studies is that White teachers are often biased against minority students with cultures and languages different from their own. These studies demonstrate that students are sometimes labeled solely on the basis of their cultures or languages. Many minority students are destined to perform according to the low expectations of their teachers and thus become functionally illiterate adults because they are deprived of the opportunity to receive quality instruction.

The way teachers treat low achievers, students with language barriers or learning difficulties, and students who require extra assistance in the classroom has significant impact on student learning. Good

and Brophy (2000, cited in Ryan & Cooper, 2001) listed 20 treatments schoolteachers often use for low achievers. These treatments are often pervasive, negative, and academically biased. They are as follows:

1. Wait and give a little time for "lows" to answer a question.
2. Do not give clues or hints or allow lows the opportunity to respond.
3. Reward lows' inappropriate behaviors and incorrect answers.
4. Criticize lows for failure.
5. Praise lows for success less frequently.
6. Give less response and less public feedback to lows.
7. Pay less attention to and/or interact less with lows.
8. Call less on lows to get involved or participate.
9. Seat lows farther away from the teacher.
10. Demand less from lows.
11. Give lows more private than public interactions.
12. Closely monitor lows in class.
13. Give more structured activities to lows.
14. Do not give lows the benefit of the doubt in borderline cases.
15. Give lows less friendly interactions, smiles, and support.
16. Give lows shorter and less informative feedback.
17. Make less eye contact with lows and respond less attentively to them.
18. Use less effective lessons and lower time-consuming instructional methods for lows.
19. Show less acceptance of lows and use their ideas and input less frequently.
20. Use impoverished and improvised curricula for lows.

After conducting observations of many classrooms, researchers have concluded that teachers behave differently toward low and high achieving students, but they are not certain why. No doubt these treatments are related to the implicit curriculum that teachers use in the classroom.

Schools Should Offer Students the Right Tools Needed for Academic Success

A California statewide study in 2005 by the Education Trust-West found that poor minority students get newer and less experienced teachers, and school districts assign the newest, lowest-paid teachers to the neediest children. These inequities in education contribute to the academic achievement gap between affluent schools located in upper-middle class neighborhoods and poor schools located in inner-city neighborhoods.

The *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 (NCLB) gives an educational model that benefits only those who are at the top of the academic scales. The goal of the NCLB act is to make sure that all students have passing scores by 2014. It requires testing and assessment of all students without considering the special needs of any. This act does not give schools the tools needed to educate children. Moreover, it fails to fund schools' efforts to find effective resources for teaching and testing students.

As many public schools have proclaimed, funding has gone from bad to worse. As some experts put it, schools under the NCLB are only "taming the beast," leaving many students untaught. Public schools are setting their priorities and programs according to not only test-driven curricula and research, but also to political interests and politicians who know so little about educating children.

Furthermore, in California, Senate Bill 2042 is an education policy to revamp K-12 programs and teacher preparation programs to improve public education; however, yet this legislation has left ELL students untouched and in limbo, with no specific plan to address their special needs.

To help second-language learners become successful in both languages and cultures, the schools have to give them the right tools from the start, tools that stimulate them academically. Teachers and administrators must encourage and accept the help of the parents of their bilingual students. They must explain clearly to parents what is happening with their children in the classroom and not put them off with blurred excuses.

The curriculum should bridge the knowledge and experiences students have with the knowledge and experiences they need to acquire. The tactics currently used by schools that often denigrate non-European cultures negatively impact the students' pride in both cultures. If schools actively promote the learning of both cul-

tures and languages, students would have the confidence to build academic skills and the motivation to become successful and productive members of both communities. Children need to grow in both their primary culture as well as the culture of the land in which they live. Otherwise, they will revert to the ghettos, to repeat the cycle of illiteracy and living an underclass lifestyle.

One way to help students grow in both cultures is to develop cultural enrichment curricula within the instructional program, curricula that teach both minority and dominant cultures. Saturating ELL students in their new culture and language will enable them to become fluent in both more quickly. Bilingual curricula should not be legislatively prohibited, as it is now; this current view sees bilingual education as a legal mechanism for segregating LEP and bilingual students, effectively depriving them of equality of education and opportunity. The elimination of segregation based on cultural and language differences will go far in reducing prejudice.

Eliminating societal prejudice is not easy. The presumption of the superiority of the dominant language and culture is difficult to change. But if culture and language differences are accommodated in classrooms, the change may slowly trickle up to the society at large. The simplest place to start is with the elimination of barriers to language learning. The Equal Education Act of 1974 prohibited states from denying educational opportunity by failing to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation in instructional programs (Kossak, 1990, p. 617). Kossak recommends that educators help students use both their primary language and their second language in order to mitigate language biases in society. A practical way to do this is to combine oral skills with language experiences and phonics skills with a strong emphasis on vocabularies and word meanings.

The biases in language testing must also be eliminated. The Bell Curve or Normal Curve should be used with careful considerations; otherwise, it predestines the results to mislead parents about ELL students and will increase the academic gap if schools continue to apply it as manipulative form of data to skew student learning based on race, perceived ability, and social class.

New tests should be developed that consider the cultural and socioeconomic understandings of the students being tested, the academics that are taught in the classroom, and the life experiences of the students. In addition, most tests focus on retention of information through reci-

tation, memorization, and regurgitation. Instead, tests should assess acquisition of new knowledge and skills through comprehension, application, cognitive development, and implication. Bilingual students are subjected to tests that do not measure any of these academic skills.

Academic progress would be greatly enhanced by the intentional teaching of the American culture. This nation has core values such as liberty, equality, justice, and individual rights, but how many new citizens learn these things? I know that schools cannot adopt and teach a particular belief system, but they can teach children that certain principles have historically guided behavior and public life in this country.

I realize this is very controversial, and I am not suggesting that educators attempt to impose any specific values on their students or change what those students and their families already believe. From schools in different countries I have learned that what is practiced at home stays at home and what is learned in school can broaden a child's understanding and lead to a better and fuller life both at home and in the larger community.

The educational system of this country was created on the basic democratic principle of equal opportunity. From those original directions set by America's founding fathers, this nation has developed the belief that every child, whether poor or rich and regardless of race, color, creed, gender, or national origin, should have equal opportunity to the same public education.

Over the past two centuries, the people of this great nation have battled over the right to universal access to schooling and the definition of equal access. For the next century, the people will continue to fight for universal quality of schooling for all children. In order for that ultimate dream to be realized, schools must recognize and renounce the hidden curriculum that relegates minority students to a minimum education at best.

Our educational leaders must put in its place a belief, a policy, and practical tools that agree with our founding documents: "All men [sic] are created equal" and therefore have equal rights. In America, one of those rights is a quality education for all—equal opportunity, equal access, and equality of instruction.

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Call for Submissions for Special Issue of *Multicultural Education* on the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Education and Society

Schools, Culture, and Trauma

Call for Manuscripts: The focus of this Special Issue is the gathering and sharing of information on Hurricane Katrina's effect on schools and educational institutions from the perspective of educational scholars and practitioners at all levels, with an emphasis on multicultural and diversity issues, specifically, the interaction of culture and trauma. Thus, in an attempt to identify and address the lessons learned from the devastating effects of Katrina on education and educational institutions, we invite contributions from multiple diversity issues and perspectives that may include, but not be limited to, race, class, and culture that surfaced from the response to Hurricane Katrina's aftermath and the rebuilding process. This Special Issue welcomes critical perspectives and is especially interested in articles from the multiple perspectives of administrators, counselors, teachers, and other higher education professionals that will provide insight into hidden issues of color, race, culture, and poverty that impact our public and higher education school systems' ability to be culturally responsive and sensitive to the students during a crisis. Authors are encouraged to share success stories or failures from which the readership can learn.

Submissions should be sent to
Aretha F. Marbley, Douglas J Simpson, & Alice Denham

Via e-mail
(Send manuscript as an attachment in Microsoft Word.
Include cover letter with author information in the body of the e-mail.)

Please address your e-mail submission to
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Deadline for submissions for this special issue is
December 1, 2006

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