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## UNLV College of Education Multicultural & Diversity Newsletter

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\*\*\* This newsletter is published twice a semester. The articles that appear in the newsletter are based on author interest and consist of both scholarly work and opinion pieces.

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**"Marriage cannot be severed from its cultural, religious and natural roots without weakening the good influence of society. Government, by recognizing and protecting marriage, serves the interests of all. Today I call upon the Congress to promptly pass, and to send to the states for ratification, an amendment to our Constitution defining and protecting marriage as a union of man and woman as husband and wife."**

**President George W. Bush**

**"Regarding homophobia in general, the good news is that there is a lot less of it than there used to be. The bad news is that it ever existed in the first place, and the worse news is that it remains far stronger than is healthy for a society dedicated in theory to equality under the law."**

**Massachusetts Congressman Barney Frank**

## INVITED GUEST COLUMN

### EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF FOSTER YOUTH WHO HAVE RECENTLY GRADUATED FROM COLLEGE

By Thomas C. Lovitt, Professor Emeritus,  
University of Washington

The statistics with respect to foster children and education are dismal. They are: more likely than non foster children to perform below grade level; more likely to have scores on state-wide achievement tests below those of non-foster youth; more likely to have repeated one or more grades than other children; more likely to have high rates of absenteeism and tardiness; more likely to drop out of school; less likely to take college preparatory courses than other youth; less likely to have access to special programs, to advance placement courses, extracurricular activities; and less likely to attend college or a postsecondary vocational program.

Since September, 2003 I have been writing profiles of four foster youth who have graduated from college. They were awarded scholarships from the Orphan Foundation of America. The monies for those scholarships are provided by the Casey Family Programs. As one can judge from the preceding gloomy statistics about foster youth and education, it is remarkable that these youth finished high school, much less completed their undergraduate degrees. Indeed, three of the four students are now enrolled in graduate programs, and the other student is a legislative correspondent with a United States Senator.

Following are the major themes that have emerged from my conversations and correspondences with those youth. Some of the topics originated from them, but most of them were initiated by me; that is, from the questions I asked. It is interesting to note that the youth related variously to most of these themes; they were generally not of a single mind.

1. "I will do it"! At some point, all of these students said to themselves that they would attend and graduate from college. Although there was a person or two in their lives to support them, they came up with the idea on their own. One woman said, "In high school, I figured that if I

wanted to get myself out of the situation I was in, the best way to do it was to go to college." When asked if she ever felt like quitting college, she said, "There were a lot of times when the pressure got really bad, but I don't think I ever wanted to drop out; that wasn't an option for me." Another student, who was equally committed to attending and graduating from college, took off a year to work following her junior year. She vowed to return, and did, eventually finishing her program.

2. "I have only one shot at it." These youth realized that they had one opportunity to go to college, and they had better make the most of it. Unlike other students—who have parents to support them financially and otherwise—who could try this college, then that one, and try this major and then another, these foster students had to get it right the first time. Relevant to this single opportunity a young man had this to say. "I had one shot at success. That was in itself a lot of pressure, that money doesn't grow on trees. I didn't come from a rich family, and I couldn't afford to stay in school five or six years. I had one shot at each class, and I had to do great and keep up a decent average."
3. "I could count on someone." There was a person or two who consistently supported these youth. It was interesting, however, that these essential individuals were not always a foster parent. In two cases, aunts were the main support, one a biological aunt and the other, a foster aunt (the sister of her foster mother). For a young man it was his grandparents, and for a young woman it was a cousin. According to her, "She is very helpful. I go to her when I have a problem. She is older, about 28."
4. "My family is important to me." These youth valued what family they had. Two of them were very close to their siblings. One of the students held out hope that someday she would reunite, at least in a small way, with her biological parents. One youth mentioned that a goal was to make up time with her biological family

that was lost when she was a teenager. A young man said, "To be honest I have lost a lot of family, and my family is very important to me. I didn't feel I had the right to be 10 hours away from them [to attend a college]. So I was in the 'blast radius' of my family, you could say."

5. "Money is essential." For these youth, even though they received scholarships, grants, and loans, money was a concern. Three of the four incurred considerable debt in attending college. One woman said, "Money was a big issue while I was in college. When you have parents, even if they don't have a lot of money, they are going to help you. They are going to be there for you, whereas when you are a foster kid, you don't have that support." Another student confided that, "One of my largest worries is that I will not be able to support myself financially. This affects me both academically and personally. Because I do not receive any financial support from family and I do not live at home, I am completely responsible for myself."
6. "It's necessary to have a plan." All of these students had charted a course. One woman formed what she called the "concrete plan for my life." She intended to move eventually to Chicago, work for an advertising agency, and attend graduate school at Northwestern University. Another student projected that, "My life, as I picture it a year from now, will be very busy, yet fulfilling. It will be filled with anticipation of and excitement over future obstacles and with a sense of satisfaction and triumph concerning my past struggles. By this time, I will have accomplished many goals in my college career and in other areas of my personal life."
7. "I feel older than I am." These youth had to grow up quickly. Several of them at age 22 or 24 said they felt as though they were 35 or older. They knew they didn't have time to party and fool around at college. They viewed the experience as a privilege, not as a given. One student said that, "when you go to college, you really cannot be a kid. You have to grow up real quick." Another said that, "at the beginning of my freshman year, I found a job at an office, where I continued working until I graduated from high school. While most of my peers and friends were out enjoying their youth, I was worrying about what to do with my life."
8. "What do I think of the system"? Their attitudes toward social workers and others in the system varied considerably. One youth did it her way. She didn't want anyone interfering with her life. Another youth totally bought into the system and touts its benefits. According to her: "When I look back at it now, I think 'Wow, they did so much for me.' As a foster kid, it is really important to listen, but I know it is really hard as a teenager to hear what other people have to say to you. I really look back at it now and I see it was so important." A young man had quite a different outlook. He said, "There is a very negative connotation attached to the idea of a social worker in my family, mainly because the social worker who was assigned to me when my parents were killed didn't want my grandparents to have custody of me. She's the one who kept it from happening for several months."
9. "Health insurance was an item." Two students had adequate health coverage while attending college and two did not. One of the latter said that now for the first time since she was 17 years old, she has health insurance because of her job as a governmental intern. She said, "I cannot tell you how many times I tried to get mental health services when I was in college, because I was very depressed." The other student who didn't have coverage said that, "If anything could be changed for kids coming out of foster care, I would hope that would be it [health care coverage]. That was a tough time. I always worked. We had the state welfare from being in foster care. But once we were 21—or was it 18?—that was it. We were on our own."
10. "My involvement with extracurricular activities." Two of the students

participated in extra activities and two did not. One woman was definitely engaged. She said, "I kept myself busy in school. In high school, I took all honors classes. I did tennis for four years, was in track and field, and was a cheerleader." One motivation for her being so occupied was to escape her foster home. She said there were several children in the home and she didn't get along with some of them. Another student didn't have time for extracurricular activities in high school because of her part-time job after school. She did note, however, "It has been an aim for me to get more involved in extracurricular activities on campus. My objective is to get the most out of my college experience both academically and socially."

11. "What about my high school counselor"? Three of the four students didn't have much good to say about their counselors. They said that when it came to knowing which courses to take, they were simply given a list of the classes and requirements and told to take care of scheduling themselves. Only one of the four students was encouraged to take advance placement classes. As for helping with financial aid, this group was likewise unimpressed with assistance from their counselors. A young woman said, "Our guidance counselor was a very nice lady, and she was there if you wanted to talk to her, but she stayed in her office and it was up to you to ask her questions." One student did say that she was always visiting her counselor because she really wanted to go to college and wanted to make sure that she did everything that needed to be done.
12. "My involvement with an Independent Living Program." Two of the students took advantage of these programs. One student knew about the programs but didn't participate, and another student was totally unaware of such services. One student who was aided said, "An Independent Living Program gave me \$350 to help pay the rent. They also cosigned for the apartment and gave me some dishes and a bed that felt like a rock

and kind of helped me set up my first apartment." The other student who was assisted by an Independent Living Program mentioned several things they did to help her, in addition to providing assistance with being independent and self-directed.

Throughout 2004 I will gather material and write profiles of four more foster youth who were awarded scholarships from the OFA/Casey program and who graduated from college. Information from that set of scholars will be integrated with these initial data. In time, we hope that the profiles of successful foster youth and the themes identified from them will assist educators, policy makers, and others in determining ways to increase the likelihood that more foster youth will enroll in college programs and graduate from them.

Meanwhile, we hope that an immediate benefit to being informed about successful foster youth will be that citizens' impressions of them will change. The prevailing, and certainly erroneous, notion of many individuals about these youth seems to be—because of their abuse and neglect—that they are intellectually dull, emotionally disturbed, and will never amount to anything. When reading about foster youth such as those featured here those beliefs should be significantly dispelled. These four students, and dozens like them, have demonstrated that when given the opportunity and proper encouragement they can be highly productive.

## **FEATURED COLUMN** **HAVING YOUR "DIFFERENCE"** **MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

By Karl Kingsley, Dental School

At a recent conference for the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) which I was attending as a faculty member of the UNLV Dental School, my mind wandered to the impending deadline for this Multicultural and Diversity Newsletter article. Then, as my leg began to twitch in nervous anticipation, my attention was diverted as the speaker, who introduced herself as a transgender woman

named Marsha, began to speak about the diverse population of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) patients, students, faculty and staff in dental schools across the country.

Marsha explained that ADEA has a new Special Interest Group, the Gay/Straight Alliance. The existence of the Gay/Straight Alliance makes a strong statement about ADEA's commitment to value the full extent of diversity that exists in dental education. This diversity encompasses not only the students and faculty in dental education, but also the dental patients that will be treated. She stated that she was making this presentation to provide a forum for ADEA members to inquire about, and explore these issues in the hope that this would help to create a more hospitable environment in the dental community for all students, faculty, administrators and patients. I smiled to myself as I realized that this presenter had just given me a wonderful topic for this newsletter article.

I strongly believe, as an institution, we need to challenge ourselves, our colleagues, our families, and even our students to be fully inclusive of diversity, not only in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability and national origin, but also in terms of sexual orientation. As a matter of policy, UNLV is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer. This means that the university is committed to providing equal opportunity and treatment in employment, admission, and all academic programs and standards. The university policy states that it does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, political affiliation, veteran status, or status with regard to public assistance in admissions, employment or the operation of its educational programs.

Although I feel this policy is a positive force and that it is important to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, this should not be confused with the creation of an environment in the University setting that is open, affirming, and inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. I was reminded, through Marsha's presentation, that the goals of a university are much more than bringing students, books, and teachers together. We, as educators, have important community and social goals which include teaching UNLV

students about the importance and value of diversity as a part of higher education and that diversity will include LGBT students, faculty and staff.

As stated by the UNLV Office of Planning, "Recognizing the individuality of each student, UNLV engenders collegial relationships and a sense of community among its members. UNLV embraces the interdependence of quality instruction, scholarly pursuits, and substantive involvement in campus and community life." In fact, one of the goals set forth by the UNLV Planning Council is to "CREATE AN INCLUSIVE AND JUST CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT", by raising awareness of the rights and responsibilities inherent in free expression among faculty, staff, and students.

I recognize the contributions that Carol Harter and the UNLV Planning Council have made towards developing cultural sensitivity, diversity training, and cultural competency, and feel that we are making significant progress in addressing these concerns on campus. I am also pleased to report that UNLV is providing forums for LGBT voices to be heard. For example, UNLV has its very own, newly reincarnated Gay/Straight Faculty Alliance and has no fewer than two student groups, SAGE and SPECTRUM, which focus on LGBT issues for law and other undergraduate students, respectively.

There are many challenges experienced in the university community by LGBT faculty, staff, administrators or students including concerns about harassment, social rejection, stereotyping or subjection to homophobic comments or overt discrimination. When I began to think about these concerns I realized that these concerns are not exclusive to LGBT people, but to anyone who belongs to a minority group; women, left-handers, Native Americans, etc. As Marsha and the group began to discuss the steps that could be taken which could help to bring about cultural understanding and competency for LGBT issues, I thought that these would be the most important things that I could possibly share with any member of the UNLV community as part of my experience. Following are some of the topics we discussed at the ADEA session which might initiate discussion and action here on our campus.

- Remember that the best way to make people comfortable with LGBT issues is to learn as much as you can about those people, and their feelings and beliefs, and make yourself as comfortable as possible with issues of diversity of sexual orientation.
- Remember that all staff, students and administrators are entitled to their own beliefs, opinions, and religious-based convictions. They should be valued just as you expect your differences and beliefs to be valued. There is no room and no tolerance for racist or homophobic remarks or actions at UNLV.
- Do not assume that homophobia affects only LGBT persons directly. Fear of people with differences affects everyone adversely wedging people apart rather than bringing them together. Staff, students, clients, or patients who are heterosexual may have children, grandchildren, other relatives or friends who are LGBT.
- Feel free to include LGBT information resources in your offices, community rooms, bulletin boards or orientation packets; it can be an effective recruiting tool and can serve to initiate early discussion about how to bring all members of the university community together.
- Please support your UNLV Gay/Straight Faculty Alliance and the UNLV SPECTRUM and SAGE student groups with your outreach and support.
- Make sure your forms (and I recommend the forms for all university-related materials) are inclusive and if possible, gender neutral. "Significant Other" or "Partner" can be included as another option for non-married LGBT as well as heterosexual couples. "Parent/Guardian 1" and "Parent/Guardian 2" are inclusive for a variety of family configurations, including same-sex parents, foster parents, guardians, and single parents.

These are simply some easy steps that we, as members of the UNLV community, can take to increase our cultural competence and make the environment in which we work, teach

and learn more LGBT-friendly. The most important step, however, is in recognizing the need to do this and making the commitment to accomplish these goals. I want to personally thank Marsha and the ADEA for providing a very important message – each one of us has the opportunity to have our “differences” make a difference in our community.

#### Resources

For more information please use:

[www.ADEA.org/sections](http://www.ADEA.org/sections) (Minority Affairs, Special Interest Groups)

[www.glbthealth.org](http://www.glbthealth.org) (Gay, Lesbian Health Access Project)

[www.verbenahealth.org](http://www.verbenahealth.org) (Lesbian, transgendered health education, support)

*Gay issues in the workplace*, Brian McNaught, 2003

*Beyond the closet: The transformation of gay and lesbian life*, Steven Seidman, 2004

*LGBT Health: findings and concerns*, Healthy People 2010 – companion document  
[www.healthypeople.gov](http://www.healthypeople.gov)

## DIVERSITY WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STUDENT LIFE

By Rebecca Mills, Student Life

The Division of Student Life has made a commitment to honor the value of diversity in our work with students and with colleagues. That commitment means that we recognize our responsibility to interact with students and with one another in ways that enhance the cultural competence of members of the university community. Consistent with the university's goal to create an inclusive and just university, we gear our interactions, programs, and services toward both the rights and responsibilities of members of the university community.

UNLV's Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA) encourages and promotes ethnic minority students' social and academic

integration into the university through a variety of events, activities, and services. MSA also works with students to create events, activities, and services that encourage minority and majority student populations to explore their cultural identity and to participate in campus diversity efforts. Finally, all Student Life staff members promote strategies that allow students to provide leadership in and advocate for creating accessible and equitable campus environments that celebrate cultural differences and promote justice.

Members of Ethnic Student Council, a part of Multicultural Student Affairs, plan and sponsor Friendship Games and Peace Week, and they participate in Homecoming and UnityFest. Students get the opportunity to serve in leadership roles and learn event planning with guidance from Student Life staff. We find that student involvement and learning increases when students plan and implement events for other students.

ALANA is a mentor program designed for first-year minority students. First to second year retention of students of color is an important UNLV goal. Freshmen who identify as Asian, Latin, African American and/or Native American develop one-to-one relationships with UNLV faculty or professional staff members who volunteer to work with them. This investment in tomorrow's leaders has paid great dividends for both the students and their mentors.

As I write this, staff and students are preparing for this year's UnityFest, a week of events that centers on the diversity of the UNLV community. This year's theme, Rebel Against Indifference, will set the stage for entertainers, programs, and cultural experiences designed to enhance the knowledge and understanding about diversity among students, faculty, and staff.

We see our work in Student Life as providing learning opportunities outside the classroom; we are fortunate to interact with students as they learn about themselves as leaders, peers, athletes, students, and citizens. We recognize that we must design carefully learning experiences that are congruent with the values and goals of the university. This means that health care workers, psychologists, career counselors, advisors, police officers, intramural staff, residence hall coordinators, and fraternity

advisors must understand and value difference as they work with an incredibly diverse group of students. They must serve as role models in the ways they interact with one another and with today's students.

As UNLV's graduates leave the university to work, live, and play they enter a world that will be increasingly more diverse. We hope that their experiences here as engaged and committed students will prepare them for that world. We hope that they will have learned to work well with those who see the world in different ways and to understand the value in hearing the perspectives of others. We hope that we can extend the faculty's commitment in the core curriculum to a multicultural perspective by offering services, programs, and materials that push students to think about their responsibilities in creating a world where diversity is celebrated and honored.

## 10 WAYS TO BE GAY FRIENDLY

By Marty Aleman, College of Education

I remember the day when my uncle told me that he was gay. I was seven years old, and he was twenty-seven, and my mother's twin brother--the second most important person in my life. I was jumping on his bed, watching him iron his clothes, when he asked, "Marty, do you know what being gay means?" I replied, "Yes, it means being happy." "Yes, it does mean being happy, but it also means something else..." My uncle proceeded to explain to me that being gay also meant that there were men who loved men, and women who love women, as boyfriends and girlfriends, or husbands and wives love each other. I was seven years old, and really didn't think anything wrong with that, as long as people still loved each other, it still seemed fine with me.

In the years to come, society taught me that being gay was absolutely not acceptable—and I was crushed. How could people say that my uncle, a person who I loved and admired so much, was not normal, or bad for being a homosexual? It hurt. It really hurt. While I was growing up, I felt that there was so

much peer pressure to be homophobic. It became so common to ridicule one another by gay-labeling. "You're so gay," "You queer!" and most commonly, calling each other the infamous "F" word. These phrases were almost a part of a new dialect. Growing up in the eighties, which was a very liberal time period, did influence the need for understanding and valuing diversity, yet when it addressed issues of homosexuality, society did very little to educate the mainstream of accepting homosexuality as being normal or healthy. Instead, the government campaigned educational many programs concentrated on becoming AIDS aware—which is good, and still very much needed. But, AIDS gave America one more reason to fear homosexuality. Unfortunately, I lived much of my life with a chip on my shoulder, and became defensive whenever my peers used homosexual connotations in a ridiculing way. I internalized it. I internalized it so much, that I lost relationships with many friends, and boyfriends because of their homophobic behaviors.

I am glad to say that although it has taken many people to experience the some of the same types of hurtful feelings as I had, (be they gay or straight), that society is finally beginning to educate people to accepting homosexuality as a part of the mainstream. I would never have dared to imagine that one-day same-sex marriage would be legalized. But, I bet that many homosexuals had.

Today, I am committed to researching why it is still difficult for the American education system to address issues pertaining to gay rights. I believe that it is while people are young, that it is easier to understand diversity, as the mind is still in its unbiased state. What is wrong with teaching and learning to appreciate individualism? My belief is that in order to be a truly diverse society, we must do our very best to teach awareness and acceptance of all people. Valuing diversity means that you continue to educate yourself, and others to strengthen an awareness and an acceptance of people who are culturally, (or sub-culturally) different.

As a cultural anthropologist, my research has begun by observing homosexuality on a cultural basis. I have learned that being gay has become a cultural affiliation for many individuals. Gay individuals have many similar life experiences and have shared beliefs

surrounding their individuality. I have learned that like most cultures, Gay individuals have formed societal "norms." Mostly, I have learned that many gay individuals just want to educate others to be accepting of gay people. I have witnessed openly gay people as strong-hearted individuals, they appreciate diversity more than most people I know, because they have first-handedly achieved the ability to be comfortable with who they are, and accept their own individuality. But, whether homosexuals are "out", or "in the closet" there still is an instinctual fear that is driven from homophobia, homophobic biases, and behaviors that may lead to anti-gay hate crimes. There are frequent trust issues, as to whether or not an individual feels secure enough, as far as their physical safety is concerned, to be openly gay. The fear factor is still present. Once again, homophobia does influence intolerance to accepting being gay as normal, and nature's first instinct of survival of the fittest comes into play. I see this intolerance as something to be ashamed of.

So, I suggest the following ways to break free from homophobia:

1. Remember Confucius's GOLDEN RULE: Treat others the way you want to be treated
2. Remember Confucius's GOLDEN RULE: Treat others the way you want to be treated
3. Understand that being homosexual is normal and healthy
4. Do not be pressured to engage in gay-labeling or homosexual anti-bias behavior, what you do or say is completely your choice!
5. Educate yourself on LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Transgendered, Queer) issues, particularly those that address civil rights
6. Do not be afraid to ask questions; as long as you are sincere and polite, more than likely a gay individual will be willing to give a truthful, honest answer regarding their sexuality /gender.
7. Never feel ashamed of a loving gay friend, or relative
8. Teach others to appreciate and understand the importance of equality, and detach themselves from homophobic peer pressure
9. Participate in LGBTQ/Straight alliance organizations, find out how you can contribute to eliminating homophobia
10. See each person as a valuable individual, and teach others to value individuality

Fighting homophobia is not difficult. It is important. It is necessary. Prejudice comes in many forms, but has always resulted in dehumanization, fear and hatred. Remember, that as educators we lead by example, and in many instances have the opportunity to teach intolerance to dehumanizing behaviors, and to value diversity in all aspects.

*SPECTRUM@UNLV is an organization that is dedicated to promoting safe, educational, social and community service programs that are open to UNLV undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff, who are interested in promoting awareness of LGBTQ/Ally issues in the greater Las Vegas Community. SPECTRUM@UNLV meets regularly on Tuesdays, from 6:30-7:30 p.m. in the Moyer Student Union.*

## WHAT ARE AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS?

By Amanda Boutot, College of Education

You are hearing about it more and more: Autism Spectrum Disorders. Current statistics suggest that as many as 1 in 150 people have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This is an extraordinary number when one considers that as little as 15 years ago, the prevalence was said to be only 1 in 10,000. The reason for this increase is unknown. However, recent increases in public awareness and efforts by various organizations to help with earlier and more accurate diagnosis may be partially the reason. Our students, teachers or future teachers in the public school system, will undoubtedly encounter students with ASD in their classrooms or schools. More and more children with ASD are being educated in general education settings for all or a portion of their school day, making ASD more than just a special education issue. Having some knowledge about ASD may help these teachers (and other professionals) to better serve these children in the schools. This article describes very briefly the characteristics, causes, and treatment issues in ASD.

## Typical Characteristics

Characteristics of autism range from very mild to severe. Generally speaking no two children with an ASD are alike; overgeneralized, statements such as, "all children with ASD..." or even "most children with ASD" are thus inappropriate and send a false message about the nature of these disorders. While similar in terms of diagnostic criteria, ASDs as they are currently known, manifest very differently for each individual person. Some typical characteristics may include the following:

- Delay or lack of speech (not so for Asperger's Syndrome)
- Resistance to change or changes in routine
- Insistence on sameness
- Lack of eye contact
- Sensitivity to sensory sensations such as light, sound, touch, or certain textures
- Repetitive behaviors, known as "self-stimulatory behaviors" such as rocking, hand-flapping, or spinning objects
- Lack of pretend play
- Inability to initiate or sustain a conversation
- Lack of imitation
- Aloofness
- Preferring to be alone
- Echolalic speech, repeating what has been said
- Seeming not to hear others

Though these are only a few of the possible characteristics that a person with an ASD may experience, it should be noted again that these may occur at various degrees of severity and that every person with one of these disorders may display them differently.

## Causes of ASD

At this time, there are no known causes of ASD. It is, however, generally regarded as a neurological disorder, adversely affecting development in at least one part of the brain. Whether this is due to a faulty gene, a chromosomal abnormality (such as Fragile X Syndrome), or some other damage, is not known at this time. Researchers are frantically searching for an exact cause of ASD, and it is believed that multiple causes may ultimately be identified. While several theories as to specific causal agents (such as vitamin deficiencies and

vaccines) have been studied, at this time, there seems to be no conclusive link between any one specific agent and ASD. Indeed, there may be multiple causal agents for even one person with these disorders.

### **Is There a Cure?**

A primary goal in identifying the cause of ASD is to then hopefully identify a cure. At this time, however, given that no known cause has been identified, it is impossible to say that there is a cure. Many treatments have been proposed that may be effective in reducing or even eliminating symptoms, however, until the exact nature of the disorders are known, it is impossible to say that one has been "cured" of their autism.

### **Prognosis**

Do not be discouraged, however, by the lack of knowledge about the causes of ASD, or by the lack of a known cure. Many people with ASD grow up to lead successful, contributing, and independent lives as adults. Early and effective intervention is key. Think of ASD similar to the "common cold", though a "cure" per se has not been identified, treatment of the symptoms is certainly possible.

### **Effective Treatment**

Education and effective treatment can be called the "aspirin" for ASD. Various educational treatments have been identified over the years, some with much success, and others with minimal success. The most important goal of any educational program or treatment is to help the person with ASD become more functionally independent. This may involve teaching her how to communicate with others, appropriate play or work skills, social skills, or modifying behaviors. Treatments generally involve at least one of three models based on theoretical perspectives: the Developmental Model, which emphasizes a child-centered, naturalistic teaching approach; the Perceptual-Cognitive Model, which focuses on teaching students with ASD to attend to and communicate with others through visual cues and sensory integration, for example; and/or the Behavioral Model, which is based primarily on Applied Behavioral Analysis (Scheuermann & Webber, 2002). Again, early intervention is key, and as each of these children have varying

degrees of impairment and need, the decision as to which program is best or most appropriate must be made on an individual basis, and not on what is the "hot" treatment of the time.

### **Conclusion**

While much remains a mystery in the field of ASD, more information is coming in from researchers and professionals daily. Increased awareness and understanding of ASD can help school professionals better serve these children in the public schools. Those with an interest in ASD are encouraged to visit the website of the Autism Society of America at [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org) or the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Developmental Disabilities (DDD) website at [www.dddcec.org/](http://www.dddcec.org/) (note that DDD will hold its national conference in Las Vegas October 11-12, 2004; contact Amanda Boutot for more information on either organization).

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## **AS MUCH AS I AM LEARNING ABOUT JAPAN, I AM LEARNING MORE ABOUT AMERICANS: A FORMER UNLV STUDENT REFLECTS ON HER EXPERIENCE WHILE HOSTING A STUDENT FROM JAPAN**

By Medley Denne, College of Education

A letter to my professor . . . I have been thinking about you lately since we have a Japanese Cultural Homestay International student living with us. I am learning a lot about our community here. This reminds me of the

conversations we had in the multicultural class last summer.

I knew very little about Japan before Chika arrived but have studied up some since she got here two weeks ago. However, I still know very little. We were given a four-page information sheet on Japan and general information on Japanese culture and traditions before Chika arrived. We (my husband and I) read it and learned many things about Japanese customs, including the notion that most Japanese do not hug nor greet Westerners by shaking hands. We also learned that Japanese usually turn off the water when taking a shower due to very small water heaters in Japan and that they do not have clothes dryers.

With this information in mind, my husband and I headed to the bus that was carrying 17 international stay students from Japan. We were appalled when the first "host mom" found her student for the first time and gave her a big hug. I cringed for the poor girl knowing this was not the appropriate way to greet someone from Japan!!! I thought to myself "Duh"!!! Did you bother to read the information provided to you? Do you have any respect at all for other people and their culture!!! When we finally looked up after putting our heads down in shame after witnessing the hug, there was Chika. We kindly held out our hands, she shook them and nodded as we welcomed her to America. That night, we listened quietly as the water from the shower turned on, then off. Then on, off. On, off. I smiled.

We read the information sheet and learned that 84% of Japanese people in Japan practice a combination of Shinto and Buddhism with only 1% of the population being Christian. After talking with Chika, we learned she practices Buddhism. I had to leave for Las Vegas that first weekend so Chika stayed with a friend she met during the week. I met the host family and made arrangements. The host mom said they would be going to church on Sunday. I discussed this with Chika and told her it should be a different but good experience for her (Even though I am not Christian and therefore do not attend church). While in Las Vegas, I learned that the host family took Chika and her friend to see the movie, *Passion of the Christ*. I was aware of the church thing but was not informed of the movie selection until after

the fact. The girls were very upset . . . horrified, in fact, as they cried through the movie, not understanding what they were seeing, unable to interpret the language due to English being their second language! I was crushed for the girls. I felt horrible. I couldn't believe someone would make such a poor decision. Again, I questioned to myself . . . "DID YOU READ THE INFORMATION SHEET? "

Many similar things have occurred with host families and their international home stay students during past week. To sum it up, I have learned that people in my community do not bother to learn about other people and their cultures. Or maybe they have learned about them but they don't care. They are very disrespectful and I am embarrassed.

I know very little about Japan, but at least I tried to learn enough to be respectful of Chika and the other students. These students do things for a reason. They wear long sleeves when it is 80 degrees for a reason! It does not matter what the reason is. It is not my place to insist they wear short sleeves because I might think they will be hot. As much as I am learning about Japan, I am learning more about America, Americans, and how and why we are viewed the way we are by people from other countries.

My point in this long letter to you is simple. It is an example of when learning really occurs. As much as I learned in your class last summer, the real learning occurs after the course when I apply the skills. I thank you, and Chika does, too!

## RECRUITING FOR DIVERSITY

By Suzanne Devlin and Jen Fabbi,  
University Libraries

The UNLV strategic plan includes a commitment to hiring, motivating and rewarding superior faculty, professional and classified staff. The University is committed to an inclusive and just campus environment that respects diversity and free expression. To that end, it is a stated core value of the UNLV Libraries to hold in high regard the diversity of people and ideas. UNLV Libraries' goal is to shape our services so that they are relevant,

enticing and meet the needs of the diverse students, faculty and staff that make up our UNLV community. With this as our goal, it is critical for library staff at all levels to reflect the variety in backgrounds and perspectives of the people we serve. Attracting and interacting successfully with diverse candidates is important to our success as an organization.

One step we are taking to increase the breadth of our candidate pool is to publish and distribute our vacancy announcements as widely as possible. This year we have seven vacant positions, and for the first time, we are recruiting from several sources that provide the opportunity to communicate with qualified candidates who come from a variety of backgrounds. In addition to traditional recruiting, we have published all seven of our vacancy announcements through the following organizations: Black Caucus of the American Library Association, REFORMA, Asian/Pacific American Library Association, and the American Indian Library Association. We also send our announcements to five masters of library science degree programs that historically have a predominantly African American student body: University of Southern Mississippi, Drexel University, Clark Atlanta University, North Carolina Central University and Louisiana State University.

Most of these organizations either do not charge or charge only a nominal fee to publish our announcement to their readership. In total we incur a cost of \$140 per vacancy to advertise in the publications of these organizations. The obvious benefit of this practice is reaching and communicating with targeted populations. The less obvious and perhaps more powerful benefit is that every time we post another vacancy announcement, we are building one-on-one relationships with contacts at these organizations. We believe that it is these personal relationships that will ultimately benefit our organization the most.

Increasingly standard methods of publicizing vacancy announcements are through the publications of a particular association or organization, through the websites of these organizations, or via electronic discussion lists. Below is a list of organizations, publications, and listserves that address multiculturalism and diversity in education. Please note that as search

committees, it is important that you document where you have posted your vacancy announcements, so that you may report these steps or replicate them for future searches.

### **Multicultural & Diversity Education Organizations and Associations**

- National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) <http://www.nameorg.org/>
- Anti-Defamation League Education Department <http://www.adl.org/education/default.asp>
- Council for Opportunity in Education <http://www.coenet.us> Site includes a "Job Opportunities" listing
- Educators for Social Responsibility <http://www.esrnational.org/home.htm>
- Employment page at University of Maryland's Diversity Website <http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/Topic/Diversity/General/Employment/>
- Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/home.html>
- HBCU-Central Job Recruiting Service <http://hbcu-central.com/careercenter/>
- Global and Multicultural Education Center <http://www.kcglobalconcepts.org/>
- Minority and Women Doctoral Directory <http://www.mwdd.com/>
- National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) <http://www.nabe.org/> Site includes a Members Only "Discussion Forum"
- National Coalition For Women and Girls in Education <http://www.ncwge.org/>
- National Education Association Asian and Pacific Islander Caucus <http://www.geocities.com/apic4uus/>
- Many state individual state associations for multilingual/multicultural education. Search the web by state name and "multicultural education association." Example: Illinois Association for Multilingual Multicultural Education (IAMME) <http://www.iamme.org> Site includes "Employment Opportunities" section

## Selected Multicultural Education Publications

- *Multicultural Perspectives*
- *NAMENews*
- *Multicultural Education*
- American Educational Research Association Special Interest Group: Association of Critical Examination of Race, Ethnicity, Class, & Gender in Education Newsletters at <http://www.aera.net/sigs/newsletters/s03ce/recge.pdf>

## Electronic Discussion Lists for Multicultural Education

- AASNET-L (African American Student Network; email [listserv@listserv.uh.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.uh.edu))
- AFAMHED (African Americans in Higher Education; email [listserv@cms.cc.wayne.edu](mailto:listserv@cms.cc.wayne.edu))
- MULT-ED (Multicultural education list; email [listproc@gmu.edu](mailto:listproc@gmu.edu))
- MULTC-ED (Multicultural education discussion; email [listserv@umdd.umd.edu](mailto:listserv@umdd.umd.edu))
- MULTICULTURAL-ED (Multicultural education list; email [listproc@lists.fsu.edu](mailto:listproc@lists.fsu.edu))
- MULTI-L (Discussion of multi-lingual education; email [listserv@barilvm.biu.ac.il](mailto:listserv@barilvm.biu.ac.il))
- NAME-MCE (NAME listserv; subscribe at <http://www.nameorg.org/listserv.html>)

## TEACHING STUDENTS FROM ALTERNATIVE ROUTE PROGRAMS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

By Cathi Draper-Rodriguez and Yaoying Xu, College of Education

Over the past twenty years most states have developed alternative teacher certification programs in early childhood education and early childhood special education (ECE/ECSE) as a means to alleviate teacher shortages (Edelen-Smith & Sileo, 1996; Feistritzer & Chester, 1991; Sindelar & Marks, 1993). alternative

route programs vary from state to state and are broadly defined as any programs that are different from the traditional university teacher education program (Bradshaw, 1998; Hawley, 1990; Stoddart & Floden, 1995; Zumwalt, 1996). Alternative teacher preparation routes have been an essential component in many teacher education programs.

Like many other rural states, the state of Nevada has experienced critical teacher shortages in the area of ECE/ECSE. Therefore, alternative routes to teacher preparation programs have developed over the past ten years. These alternative route programs include both undergraduate and graduate level and involve students from the fields of ECE/ECSE as well as other areas. In general, university based alternative route programs are identical in content to traditional programs, but the format and the process of preparation are different. This article focuses on the unique characteristics of alternative ECE undergraduate programs and provides strategies for working with students in these programs.

### *Characteristics of alternative route programs* *Format*

Most alternative route programs are designed and delivered in a cohort format. Unlike traditional students who have more choices in terms of courses and time, alternative route students usually need to take the classes as a whole group in a more structured mode. The schedules are more condensed than traditional programs. Each class session lasts longer and is usually run during weekends.

### *Individuals*

The characteristics of the students enrolled in alternative route to licensure programs will ultimately lead to the greater diversification of educators. Through innovative timelines and incentives, students who otherwise may not be able to receive education degrees receive undergraduate and graduate degrees. Students, who are older, who have been out of school for longer periods, and who come from lower economic backgrounds are drawn to these programs because of their speed and low cost to the student. Graduates of these programs bring more diverse backgrounds and experiences to the ECE classroom and better meet the needs of the increasingly diverse ECE student population.

Most of the students in undergraduate alternative route programs do not join the program directly after graduating from high school. This is maybe due to a number of years' experiences that are a requirement as entry in the program. The students in the program have a great range of age diversity. The mean age of these students is higher than the mean age of students in traditional programs.

This time away from an educational setting has given these students a variety of life experiences. These life experiences lead to students who have involved discussions in the classroom. Many times it is these life experiences in the field that lead the students back to school. They have a strong desire to learn more about an area that they care about and in which they have experienced.

This time away from school is also a disadvantage for these students. They may need to relearn basic survival skills. These survival skills include knowing how to study for a test, when to approach the instructor with questions, and what comments are appropriate to make during class. Many times these problems are due to a lack of time to a school setting. These students may require more time to process information given during the lecture.

This desire leads to a strong commitment from the student. These students have strong goals for themselves. They have learned from past experiences and want to use those experiences to make their future better and more economically sound. The students are emotionally invested in their education.

Because of recruitment practices, students in alternative route programs are more likely to be from a diverse population. The students from these diverse populations have a different ethnic and linguistic background than many of the traditional teacher candidates. This leads to increased language diversity, including diverse languages and dialects. The need for teachers from diverse populations is acute. The culture of the teacher impacts how they interact in the classroom.

The cohort format of these programs leads to a strong relationship between the participants in the program. Students share a bigger part of each other's lives than just being classmates. They become a family. Within these groups, there are levels of closeness, but there

remains a level of unity between all of them.

It is always important to remember that there is also high level of diversity within these groups. Though they all have life experiences, they are very different life experiences. Though all are from diverse populations, they are from many different diverse populations. Some strategies are suggested below to help instructors and students be successful with these types of programs.

### *Strategies for teaching students in alternative route programs*

1. Allow students to build off the knowledge they have gained from working in the field. Because students from the alternative route programs are from the field, they all have more or less working experiences with young children. Use guided discussions as a process for learning. These students have strong opinions about their way of teaching young children. Let students discuss and debate with each other their techniques.
2. Be firm and consistent about the requirements of the class. Ensure that all students understand the condensed format of course instruction does not mean that the quality is lower than the traditional format. In other words, the expectations (or requirements) for the alternative route programs students are the same as those for the traditional students. The difference is in the method, not in the content.
3. Be available for students. Because of the fast pace of the course, let students know how they can get hold the instructor during the regular week beyond the office hours. Combine in class and out of class interaction via class discussion, email, and after class assignments.
4. Combine formal and informal teaching/learning methods in class. More flexibility is provided because of the intense schedule. For example, breakfast and lunch are allowed during discussion time, teacher instruction and student participation are balanced, individual and group presentations are arranged on choice and assignment. Encourage students who are shy to talk in class to add to the discussion. Encourage them to

work in groups with people they have not worked with before. They may resist in the beginning, but soon they would find out they have learned a lot from the interaction. Encourage group projects because the diversity (age, experience, culture, academic, etc.) will promote sharing, interaction, and learning from one another.

5. Be sensitive, understanding, and supportive. Many students are experiencing financial difficulties. Talk to them and provide information in seeking scholarship or other financial assistance from the university or the state. The condensed format and intense schedule cause more stress to them than to traditional students. Provide not only academic guidance, but also emotional support to students in stress. Allow students to express their different or even conflicting ideas or emotions in class. Be careful not to make any judgments or take a standpoint before listening to everyone's story. Be fair and be a good listener. Whenever possible let the students solve the conflicts or problems, but make sure guide the discussion on the right track.
6. Provide opportunities for every student to share her/his experience in class and respect different learning/teaching styles. Provide multiple formats of evaluation methods because of the fast pace of each course and diverse backgrounds of students. In addition to direct testing in class, take home examinations, research project based on theories and practices, and fieldwork can be conducted and evaluated in an on-going basis, even after the completion of the course.
7. Teach skills in preparing developmentally and individually appropriate programs that are relevant to children with the full range of abilities. Not only the content, but also the strategies for adapting and accommodating the general education curriculum should be the focus in order to meet the diverse needs of students.

Alternative teacher preparation approach is not just a shortcut to meet the teacher shortage in the field of ECE/ECSE; it is an important

component of teacher education programs. When their needs are identified, their strengths are valued, and appropriate strategies are applied, alternative route programs can prepare high quality ECE/ECSE teachers for children with diverse backgrounds.

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## MARRIAGE

By Kyle Higgins, College of Education

[(Life + Liberty + Property + Due Process)2 + (Love)2] X [(Commitment)2 + (Happiness)2] = Marriage

### One of the main clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution is:

Section. 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

### Previous Thoughts from the Supreme Court:

- In 1967 the Supreme Court announced that, "marriage is one of the most basic civil rights of man . . . essential to the pursuit of happiness."
- In *Zablocki v. Redhail* (434 U.S. 374 (1978)) the Supreme Court found: "importing into equal protection analysis the doctrines developed in substantive due process, the Court identified the right to marry as a "fundamental interest" that necessitates "critical examination" of governmental restrictions which "interfere directly and substantially" with the right.
- "The vital requirement is State responsibility," Justice Frankfurter once wrote, "Certainly, state legislation commanding a discriminatory result is state action condemned by the first section of the Fourteenth Amendment, and is void. The constitutional provision, therefore, must mean that no agency of the State, or of the officers or agents by whom its powers are exerted, shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. Whoever, by virtue of public position under a State government, deprives another of property, life, or liberty, without due process of law,

or denies or takes away the equal protection of the laws, violates the constitutional inhibition."

### The Realization

Marriage is a civil right.

Civil rights are not just for those folks we identify with---members of our ethnic group, those who speak our language, those who adhere to our cultural traditions, those with the same abilities as ourselves, those who have our sexual orientation, or members of our church. Civil Rights are not something that anyone one of us can deny another citizen of our country, simply because they differ from us. Civil rights are for ALL citizens.

**A Civil Rights movement has begun.**

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS: RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT WOMEN'S ISSUES WORLDWIDE

By Karla V. Kingsley, College of Education

On Sunday, February 29, 2004 Artemis Ham Hall came alive with UNLV's production of Eve Ensler's play entitled "Vagina Monologues". The performances in Vagina Monologues are based on more than 200 interviews with diverse groups of women about how they relate to their bodies, their sexuality, and to violence against women. The play is part of the larger worldwide V-Day activities, which include creative gatherings, films, theater, and benefits to raise awareness and funds to change social attitudes towards violence against women. V-Day is a non-profit corporation enlisting local citizens and volunteers, college students, church groups, and community organizations to raise funds for distribution to grassroots, national, and international organizations working to end violence against women and girls. The "V" in V-Day stands for Victory, Valentine, and Vagina. In 2001 V-Day was named one of Worth Magazine's 100 Best Charities, and in its first six years the organization has raised over \$20 million to strengthen anti-violence efforts

and support educational and legislative endeavors to protect women throughout the world. Proceeds raised from UNLV's production of the monologues were donated to local women's shelters in Las Vegas.

V-Day, now a worldwide social and activist movement, has staged large-scale benefits, including programs at the Afghan Women's Summit, The Stop Rape Contest, Indian Country Project, and Amnesty International's "Ni Una Mas" (not one more) march in Juarez, Mexico on February 14, 2004 to protest the brutal murders of over 370 women in Juarez and Chihuahua City, Mexico. Although topics such as ending rape, battery, incest, female genital mutilation (FGM), rape as a weapon of war, and sexual slavery are a major focus of the V-Day mission, the organization also aims to stage thoughtful, humorous, provocative productions that give voice to women who historically have had none. It also sponsors operations and campaigns around the world to unite individuals, communities and organizations to empower women to create a world without violence. The V-Day movement has expanded to over 1000 events worldwide including speeches, performances, protests, and fund-raising events. Some of V-Day's action initiatives include:

- The 1% campaign, which proposes that 1% of the US defense budget be directed toward the safety and security of women and girls
- A worldwide campaign to present productions of "The Vagina Monologues" to raise money to stop violence against women and girls
- Local initiatives in Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia
- The Indian country project, which raises awareness of the epidemic of violence against women and girls in Native American, Native Alaskan, and First Nations (in Canada) communities
- Afghanistan is everywhere campaign, reminding us that like their Afghan sisters, women around the world courageously challenge oppression

The V-Day website (<http://www.vday.org>) includes links to the US Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (see resources), promising

practices and model programs for law enforcement, practitioners, and victim advocates, Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October), and statistics on the worldwide plague of violence against women and girls. Additionally, the website provides information on donating to V-Day, organizing a V-Day event, anti-violence resources, and information about how to register to vote. As is common at many V-Day events, UNLV's production of the Vagina Monologues provided information and paperwork to register citizens to vote. Voting in local and national elections is one more way to speak out against gender-related violence and raise awareness about issues impacting women, such as health care and education.

In addition to V-Day's (<http://www.vday.org>) links to listings about how to report violence, obtain information about violence prevention and/or obtaining medical or police assistance, and for more information and statistics related to violence against women, a list of additional resources follows.

- Office on Violence Against Women: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo>
- Violence Against Women online resources: <http://www.vaw.umn.edu/> This site contains information about domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, child custody and protection, and batterer intervention programs
- 2004 President's Family Justice Center Initiative: <http://www.state.tn.us/finance/rds/FJC%20Sub%20Contract%20Process.doc>
- National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/nac/welcome.html>
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-7233
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), includes a 24-hour confidential rape hotline: (800) 656-HOPE
- National Victim Center: (800) FYI-CALL (394-2255). This hotline helps locate assistance in your community if you have been the victim of a violent crime
- Minnesota Center Against Violence & Abuse <http://www.mincava.umn.edu/> This site contains articles and research, training materials, funding information, & more.

**For finding and verifying statistics related to violence against women:**

- World Health Organization:  
<http://www.who.int/en/>
- Family Violence Prevention Fund:  
<http://endabuse.org/>
- Immigrant & Refugee Women's Rights Project:  
<http://endabuse.org/programs/immigrant>
- Amnesty International:  
<http://www.amnesty.org/>
- NHIC Family Violence Prevention  
<http://www.health.gov/nhic/NHICScripts/Entry.cfm?HRCode=HR3455>
- For information about Domestic Violence on an International Scale:  
<http://endabuse.org/newsflash/index.php3?Search=Article&NewsFlashID=514>

**For help locally in Clark County and Las Vegas, Nevada:**

- Homeless Transitional Shelter for Pregnant Women  
Las Vegas, NV  
(702) 242-9850
- Marian Residence  
Henderson, NV
- Women Ages 50-70  
(702) 565-6607
- Safe Nest for Women  
Las Vegas, NV  
(702) 646-4981
- Salvation Army PATH  
Las Vegas, NV
- Mentally Challenged Women  
(702) 639-0277
- Shade Tree Shelter for Women  
Las Vegas, NV  
(702) 385-0072
- Women's Development Center  
Las Vegas, NV  
(702) 796-7770

**THE SHELTERED INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION PROTOCOL (SIOP): A MODEL FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

By Lori Navarrete, College of Education

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is an instrument for instructing English language learners (ELLs) in content area classes. In response to No Child Left Behind, especially as it pertains to meeting the needs of second language learners, many districts, nationwide, have adopted this model for use in regular and ESL classrooms. Several schools in Clark County School District have adopted the SIOP model as one approach to addressing the language and academic needs of their second language learners. English Language Facilitators in the district are being trained in SIOP during the 2003-2004 school year.

**Background on SIOP**

The first version of the SIOP instrument was developed by Echevarria and Vogt in the early 1990s to evaluate the degree to which teachers use sheltered instruction when working with English language learners. Sheltered instruction refers to a content subject (science, math, or social studies) taught to ELLs by a teacher who has certification in the content area as well as specialized training in instructional strategies for teaching linguistically diverse students. Sheltered content instruction strategies include but are not limited to the following: modeling, hands-on manipulatives, commercially made pictures, overhead projector, demonstration, multimedia, timelines, graphs, bulletin boards, maps, real-life activities, previewing new vocabulary or terms, creating a word bank, reducing the linguistic load of teacher-speech, interaction between students, linking concepts to students' background, relating content material to previous lessons, varying instructional strategies, frequent checks for understanding, varying reading options, and designing lessons to provide students with a wide variety of learning opportunities (Echevarria & Graves, 1998). Sheltered instruction offers a solution to those schools

that have a number of language groups to serve with limited staff. Typically, ELLs who would likely benefit from sheltered teaching include those:

1. who come from strong academic backgrounds in the first language;
2. with intermediate fluency in the second language that have acquired English and basic skills in the American school system;
3. who were born in the United States, but who were not given the opportunity of primary language learning and English as a second-language program; and
4. who speak a language in which bilingual staff is not available (Northcutt Gonzales cited in Ovando, Collier, 7 Combs, 2003).

In 1996, Echevarria and Short received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education through the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) to develop an explicit model of sheltered instruction, 2) use that model to train teachers in effective sheltered strategies, and 3) conduct field experiments and collect data to evaluate teacher change and the effects of sheltered instruction on the English language development and content knowledge of limited English proficient students. Since then, the researchers and participating teachers collaborated to further modify the observation instruction and to create a lesson planning and delivery system for sheltered instruction.

### The Model

The SIOP Model is organized around eight components essential for making content comprehensible for ELLs and for developing their academic English skills. The eight components are as follows: Lesson Preparation, Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice/Application, Lesson Delivery, and Review/Assessment (Short, Hudec, & Echevarria, 2002).

**Lesson Preparation.** The lesson plan should incorporate content objectives from district, state, or national standards along with systematic development of language objectives. The language objectives can be taken from the TESOL ESL standards, district or state ESL standards or language arts standards. The objectives should provide practice in the

four language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. They should also incorporate strategies for grammar, vocabulary, and language learning skills. It is important that the students know what the objectives are so they know what the teacher expects of them. An example of a content objective is: *Students will be able to describe the means of transportation used by Native Americans in New York in colonial America.* An example of a language objective is: *Students will be able to preview the text, interpret and discuss pictures in the chapter, and identify and define key vocabulary in bold print.*

**Building Background.** There is often a mismatch between a student's cultural background and what is being taught in the classroom. Students from diverse backgrounds may struggle to comprehend a text or a concept because their worldview does not match that of the text or the culture for which the text is written. Therefore, it is critical that the teacher incorporate strategies to activate students' background knowledge explicitly and provide linkages between the students' knowledge and experiences to the new concepts being presented. Questioning, charts, KWL, and student journals are just a few of the strategies that can be used to provide these linkages.

**Comprehensible Input.** In the SIOP Model, effective teachers adjust their speech and classroom activities so that the message to the student is understandable. The strategies for comprehensible input are especially important for ELLs who have to learn two things simultaneously: English and subject matter. Repetition, avoiding jargon, avoiding idiomatic speech and giving clear directions are some of the ways to ensure comprehensible input.

**Strategies.** Strategies are what students do to help them understand, study, and/or retain new information. English language learners at non-advanced levels of proficiency tend to not use learning strategies at all or not use them effectively (Echevarria, Voght, and Short, 2000). Instead, they focus their mental energy on such things as translating words and pronouncing new terms while learning English. Teachers must provide explicit instruction in learning strategies. They need to model the strategies and scaffold activities when students practice the strategies in their lessons.

**Interaction.** Sheltered content classes should be structured so that students are interacting with the teacher and with their peers. In the SIOP model, there needs to be a balance between teacher and student talk. Students need to be given as many opportunities as possible to develop their English skills and to learn from each other. Opportunities for interaction might include students engaging in elaboration, negotiation, clarification, and persuasion, among others.

**Practice/Application.** Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and/or tactile learning opportunities are an important component of a well developed SIOP lesson. Like all students, ELLs have a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences. Lessons that build in hands-on, visual, and other kinesthetic tasks benefit second language learners because they give students the opportunity to practice the language and content knowledge through multiple modalities.

**Lesson Delivery.** Planning a sheltered instruction lesson is the first major step in helping ELLs learn academic English and content. Lesson's goals and objectives must be met during the allotted time so that learning can take place. Teachers must pace the lesson so all students are comprehending the concepts. Checks for understanding, modeling, and practices are all important components to build into a lesson. Active learning is absolutely necessary for student learning, retention, and generalization. The following quote illustrates this point clearly: *When teachers spend their time and energy teaching students the content the students need to learn, students learn the material. When students spend their time actively engaged in activities that relate strongly to the materials they will be tested on, they learn MORE of the material (Leinhardt, Bickel, and Pally, 1982).* The following factors contribute to high levels of student engagement: well planned lessons, clear explanation of academic tasks, appropriate amount of time spent on academic task, strong classroom management skills, opportunities to apply information in meaningful ways, and active student involvement (Echevarria & Graves, 1998).

**Review/Assessment.** This component of the SIOP Model involves reviewing important concepts, providing constructive feedback through clarification and modeling, and making

instructional decisions based on student responses. Teachers need to conduct formative evaluation during the lesson and adjust their plans accordingly. At the end of the lesson, teachers should schedule a protected time to evaluate the extent to which students have mastered the lesson's objectives.

In sum, the SIOP model provides a comprehensive framework for planning and implementing effective lessons for ELLs. The model has been empirically validated and used successfully with ESL students for over ten years. The approach incorporates the use of sound pedagogical methods in teaching and assessing linguistically diverse students.

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## IMPROVING INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS

By Michelle Richardson, College of Education

“Teachers pledge to do all good things, knowing that they are more than keepers of brothers and sisters”

Maya Angelou, Black Family Pledge

Education plays an important role in American society. Teachers in general are trained to treat every student with equal compassion and understanding during instruction. Special education teachers are trained to treat each student as an individual and deliver differential instruction. These methods have proven successful for many years and will continue to be successful overall. But what about students who are from diverse backgrounds? What about the students who have to be bussed across town daily for over an hour to get to school? What about the students who don't have time to do homework every night? What about the students who can't focus on graduating sometime in the future? What about the students who need a little more than the average teacher can offer? These questions are questions that face many African-American students in our classrooms.

Twenty-three percent of African-American children were born out of wedlock in 1960 (Bradley, 2003). That number has risen drastically since that year. The National Center for Health Services states that 68% of African-American children were born out of wedlock in 2002 (Keith, 2003). Two parent families are unusual in the African-American community. Children are affected directly by the circumstances that come with growing up in a single parent home. The income level of two parents can be substantial and can determine the difference between poverty and a better quality of life. Too often people make the assumption that the only thing children have to think about is having fun while they're growing up. Many African-American children have to worry about growing up -- period. Many African-American

children must learn how to survive before they can think about learning how to read.

There has been a rise in African-American female head of households (Patton, 1999). Circumstances surrounding this increase have a direct affect on the African-American children. The Children's Defense Fund released an analysis stating that the number of African-American children living in extreme poverty was at its highest level in 23 years (Education Update, 2003). Most families' do the best they can with the little resources to raise the children. The poverty status of an African-American family of four in 1994 was 27% (Department of Labor, 1995). The income for an African-American family of three in 1994 making under \$10,000 was 21% (Department of Labor, 1995). The average poverty threshold in annual income for a family of four was \$18,104 in 2001 (United States Census Bureau, 2002). African-American children living in female head of household families living in poverty in 2001 was 47% (United States Census Bureau, 2002). Almost one million African-American children in 2001 lived in households making less than half the federal poverty line (Education Update, 2003).

African-American single mothers place a strong hold on children to keep a family together. A single mom has to help her children learn survival skills and independence early in life. Some of the responsibility traditionally placed on a second parent may be delegated to one or all of the children. When African-American children are old enough, they are taught to clean the house, wash clothes, iron, cook, and maintain care for younger siblings. Most African-American parents don't assign chores, they give jobs in the house. Children don't choose to do chores. Children are expected to have the house clean before parent/guardian gets home from work or suffer the consequences. That's just the way it is.

African-American parents face the challenging task of actively combating negative messages of racism while teaching children to succeed in American society (Comer & Poussaint, 1992). Many people won't admit that racism still exists, but it does. The Executive Director of the grass roots Institute for African-American Leadership suggests that subtle racism still exists in the United States (Heckel,

2004). It is a reality for adults in African-American communities and unfortunately for the children as well. According to the Institute for the Study of Race Relations at Virginia State University, 66% of African-American people and 45% of Caucasian people in America think that race relations will continue to be a problem (Heckel, 2004). African-American children have to be taught to be alert and work twice as hard as everybody else to receive the same benefits. These children are born into a group of people who have the disadvantage of constantly having to prove themselves.

Basic survival skills are taught when toddlers start walking. Some examples may include distinguishing between what to touch as opposed to what not to touch, how far away from adults to play, and to be obedient to adults. Most African-American mothers don't pick up all of the items off of tables and other furniture that babies can reach. They leave them within perfect grasp and show babies what not to touch. The parents are consistent and firm with the children and most babies don't touch things on tables or furniture. This is important for survival later because kids won't be tempted to touch, play with, or possibly take things in public places. Being accused of stealing because one looks suspicious becomes a natural part of living an African-American life. Being followed when browsing or shopping becomes irritating insulting for African-American adults. Some instances such as these can be avoided by knowledge of how to interact with objects and people in the environment without drawing unnecessary attention.

The classroom teacher will have more success with African-American children by establishing clear expectations immediately and following through with appropriate consequences for behavior. The boundaries and expectations were set when the African-American child was a baby. It's no trouble to take on a new set of expectations at school. That feeling of uncertainty or anxiety that comes with too much freedom can make the child feel unsafe. The child then needs some way to cope or adapt to this new way of thinking. Some of them may act out to get the teacher's attention for some feeling of security.

African-American children are taught to stay in sight or within the sound of a

responsible adult's voice at all times. This way, African-American children are at a decreased risk of being abducted and easily located when needed. The child responds immediately when the adult calls.

Teachers can establish a similar system of expectations in the classroom. As soon as a direction is given, the student should be expected to follow it immediately or suffer the consequences. This is what the African-American child is used to and will respond to right away. When there is inconsistency with delivery of appropriate consequences, the student can feel confused. The child then looks for ways to replace the confusion. The behaviors manifested may include noncompliance, talking back to teachers, entertaining other students, and ignoring further instruction. If the classroom is organized in such a way that the teacher can see every student while teaching, the student knows he/she cannot get away with anything inappropriate.

African-American caregivers in the home setting keep a close watch on children at all times. Although mainstream American culture teaches young people to take responsibility, the African-American adult feels total responsibility for any problems or accidents that may happen as a result of something the children may have done. Proactive steps are taken to reduce the chance of unnecessary injuries or illnesses. Teachers can use some of the same proactive methods in the classroom. Arranging the furniture for better student observation is one example. Delivering positive consequences for appropriate behavior and negative consequences for inappropriate behaviors immediately is another example. This leaves little room for questions or confusion about why certain things are happening in the class.

African-American children are taught to play and talk with other children or play alone when adults are talking together or interacting with one another. Children are not expected to contribute to the adult discussion or stare at the adults when they are talking. Children are expected to engage in kid things. In an African-American family, a child is considered to be rude and disrespectful if they stare or interrupt adult discussion.

Consequently, most African-American children may not immediately jump right into raising their hands or volunteering information during class discussions. They may wait until the teacher calls them on because this is what they are used to at home. Gradually inviting them into the conversation by calling on them when the answer will most likely be correct would be helpful. African-American students will become more comfortable contributing to class discussions when the new model of adults talking with children about important issues is introduced. They will eventually learn that it is acceptable to talk with adults as well as peers in the classroom environment about the topic at hand. Teachers should give several opportunities for African-American students to respond during the day.

African-American children are taught to obey their elders. When someone older is traveling with them in a vehicle, the older person always sits in the front seat. There is no such thing as calling shotgun. This phenomenon has everything to do with respect in the African-American community, even if the person is just a few years older. African-American children are accustomed to sitting in the back seat because there is usually at least one other adult riding in a vehicle. This may cause them to automatically migrate to the back of the classroom when given a seating choice. The teacher can offer an environment where the students may choose a different seat or change the seating arrangement periodically to let the student experience sitting near the front or near the instructional area. This will help African-American students understand that they don't always have to sit near the back.

The parent or guardian of African-American students can be a valuable asset. African-American children have a great deal of respect for the parents and adults. They do not want to disappoint them for any reason. This can work in the teacher's favor. Notifying parents of any inappropriate behavior will eliminate half of the misbehavior teachers face. The consequences should be delivered immediately to be most effective.

African-American students learn just like every other student learns. The delivery of instruction and the environment established in the classroom the first week of school can make all the difference in the world in terms of

establishing support and expectations. If the teacher feels comfortable with all students and is willing to be flexible, all students can benefit from effective instruction. If the teacher is confident and "with it" at all times, the students may grant their trust. If the instructor is consistent in delivery of positive and negative consequences, the students will feel safe. If the teacher takes time to observe, he/she will witness the development of intelligent young students.

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## LOCAL SCHOOLS EMPOWERING FAMILIES THROUGH ENGAGEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S LITERACY: A REVIEW OF FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS IN NREA SCHOOLS

By Deborah Perry Romero and Marilyn McKinney, College of Education

During the past two years (2002-2004), under the auspices of the Nevada Reading Excellence Act (NREA) and with the support and guidance of the research team at UNLV, local elementary schools have been planning and implementing intense outreach efforts to work with the families of K-3 children. Spearheaded by literacy specialists at each school, these teams have been working to design and promote specific activities that actively involve families with the aim of strengthening their children's literacy development, both in and out of the classroom.

As part of our ongoing research to document and learn from these efforts, we have collected and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data from a range of sources including: 1) an initial on-line survey in October completed by Literacy specialists; 2) participant feedback from a workshop on family literacy in January; 3) field notes from ethnographic observations during site visits to family literacy events in Winter 2002 and Spring 2003; 4) details from family literacy activities posted on the NREA website; 5) insights from a series of site visits and interviews with Literacy specialists conducted in May 2003; 6) summary data for Family Literacy 2002 -2003 compiled during the Summer 2003; and 7) a family literacy survey completed by 1,496 parents at NREA schools. While this extensive range of data lends itself to many interesting and far-reaching analytical paths, in this article, we focus on the broad areas related to the design and implementation of activities, aspects we consider foundational components for family involvement. We hope that the lessons learned and the experiences gained from the NREA school sites will serve as an impetus to rethink how we are engaging the families and their children in our schools. Furthermore, the kinds

of data and findings we are obtaining provide an exciting opportunity to broaden our notions of what counts, both as literacy and as parental involvement.

### Planning and Implementation of Family Literacy Activities

In the fall of 2002, over 30 schools in southern Nevada completed an initial online survey that focused on documenting schools' accomplishments in the area of family literacy. The data reveals that each site is developing its literacy program through a series of regular sessions or meetings designed to not only inform but also involve families. Although there is considerable variability across sites concerning the timing and frequency of events, who is involved in organizing and planning, who participates, the types of activities, and the effects of advertising and home-school communication, we found that *all* schools, as a result of their efforts, are gradually learning what works for them and their families in their particular context.

### Design of Events

Schools report that family literacy events occur at differing times during the school day and in the evening. More than 60% of schools report holding family literacy events at least once a month, 10% meet twice a month and another 16% report weekly activities, most of which occur during the school day. For some schools this means inviting parents to drop in or stay for activities such as "Muffins with Mom" or "Donuts with Dad" in the early morning when they bring children to school. These events, which are accompanied by a light snack and last between 45-90 minutes, engage parents in shared reading activities and explicitly promote specific strategies that parents can use with their children, such as asking questions or stimulating talk about characters or events in books.

Evening school wide events, such as a Family Literacy Night that targets several grade levels, were held by 35% of the schools. These events often include a guest speaker or a variety of activities that parents and children can attend together and are typically scheduled between six and eight o'clock. In contrast to morning events, these last longer and take place less frequently

than those that coincide with the teachers' school day; consequently these place different demands on teachers and schools.

About 5% of the total schools report holding events immediately after school or in the last hour before the school-day ends. These activities engage families through Parent Resource Centers or lending libraries where they can check out reading materials and interactive literacy support packs such as Leap Frog. Interestingly, we found that 38% of schools schedule literacy events at varying times during the day, which offers flexible opportunities for families to participate. In spite of the fact that families spend varying amounts of time in these different activities (the average was 2 hours and 12 minutes), it is important to remember that length of time is often compensated for by the frequency of events.

### **Who organizes and supports family literacy events**

Although the family literacy activities tend to fall under the direct supervision of the NREA literacy specialists at each school, many of the activities reported are organized with assistance from additional participants. For example, many of the NREA schools are also Title 1 schools with established literacy teams and some kind of family literacy program. At other schools family literacy activities are organized in collaboration with a reading specialist(s) and/or a literacy committee, consisting of classroom teachers who work closely with the NREA literacy specialists in planning and designing activities that align with classroom and curriculum learning. Interestingly, only a few schools report that they receive direct input from the PTA, parent committee members and individual parents who volunteer.

Finally, the significance of principals' participation should not be underestimated. Those schools that appear to be doing well, in terms of attendance and frequency of events, also report a strong commitment and participation from their principals. Ultimately, we are finding that the majority of family literacy events are the result of collective decision making and planning. For all schools, the NREA support provided an additional stimulus to strengthen and expand the existing

infrastructure, allowing for systematic, monthly, bi-monthly and even weekly meetings.

### **Who attends family literacy events**

Despite the considerable variation in numbers of families attending, the consensus from schools reports is that participation has increased in relation to previous school years. Attendance appears to depend on the activities and the target audience on any given occasion. For example, some schools report activities directed to specific 'at-risk' students and their families, as identified by teachers and student scores; others choose to direct events to a whole grade level or a specific track; and still others show a preference for school-wide literacy nights or fairs.

Likewise, the family members who attend also vary, depending on both the nature of the event and the time of day. One common observation across schools highlights attendance by extended families, including aunts and uncles, grandparents and other relatives, as well as pre-school siblings and older brothers, sisters and cousins. This finding supports other research (Epstein, 1998) that families are eager to be involved in their children's education, and strengthens the notion of family-centred schools as welcoming spaces in the community.

Attendance fluctuates considerably across schools. School-wide family literacy events that are longer in duration and have multiple activities tend to record proportionally higher numbers. One school registered over 100 participants for a fifty-minute morning "Books and Breakfast" event. The following month, the same school at their Family Literacy Night, which lasted two hours, recorded over 230 attending! Several schools report groups of core regulars who are central in extending informal invitations within the community and across families, thus serving as an important grassroots medium to diffuse the schools' efforts and involve others.

### **Family Literacy as Partnerships: Goals and Activities.**

The broad, shared goal at all schools is for these events to involve parents in their children's literacy development. Schools engage parents through a range of activities with a particular, but not exclusive, focus on literacy,

designed to provide them with both material and conceptual tools to help them help their children succeed at school and at home. Our analysis of the types of family literacy events held across all NREA schools draws on the notion of family-school partnerships (Epstein et al., 2002) to provide a broad framework through which we can conceptualize the ways in which schools and families are successfully working together to assist students. A critical feature of these partnerships concerns the kinds of opportunities that they provide for different types of involvement. In the remainder of this article we briefly describe two prevailing types observed at NREA schools: communicating with families and support for literacy learning at home.

### **Communicating with families**

In order for schools to involve families it has been necessary for them to increase communication with families. Heightened efforts at communicating and advertising events with families have also lead to increases in attendance. Over the past two years schools have adopted several techniques, including the use of bilingual, multimodal methods to inform and invite families to forthcoming events. These range from traditional fliers and handouts sent home with children, to the creation of calendars, posters and highly visible, bilingual banners that announce in English "Family Literacy Night" and in Spanish "Noche de Alfabetización" placed outside the school the week of the event. Other methods include sending home wrist bands and stickers on children on the day of the event, personal announcements made by the principal over the loud-speaker system, and classroom visits by literacy specialists to promote the books and activities that will be presented at the event.

Increased communication implies not just bringing families into school, but also seeking ways to strengthen two-way communication via the development of opportunities for families to respond and share their ideas. Early on in the grant several schools expressed concern about their lack of bilingual staff and viewed this as an obstacle to successfully engaging parents and families who did not speak English. As a result, we recruited a pool of about 15 translators who were assigned to schools upon request and worked with

parents and teachers at family literacy events to help increase comprehension and participation. Schools using translators have reported more active participation and are pleased to be able to promote bilingual events in this way.

Additional efforts to understand families have lead many schools to regularly administer short 'exit surveys'. These consist of a brief questionnaire asking parents for feedback on the event they attended, what aspects they particularly enjoyed, and suggested areas for more assistance. Parental responses are then used as a basis for planning future events. Recently, a longer Family Literacy Survey solicited feedback, comments and suggestions from parents about their children's literacy development and learning, and asked about their knowledge of the process and issues of interest. Completed by almost 1500 parents across 31 schools, this survey shows overwhelming support for these kinds of events and provides evidence of two-way communication between schools and families. Over 75% of families 'strongly agreed or agreed' that NREA schools show an understanding of families' cultural backgrounds as reflected in the types of literacy activities being implemented. Furthermore, 75% of parents perceived that their school's family literacy activities are "effectively designed to address the needs of parents and families and school." Both English (54%) and Spanish (46%) versions of the surveys were completed. This linguistic diversity was further evidenced in reporting of home language use (42% indicated English as the language spoken at home, 34% Spanish, 20% both English and Spanish, and 3% of families use languages other than English or Spanish at home).

Almost 400 written comments were collected, and as exemplified below, they reflect families' appreciation as well as an awareness of schools' efforts:

*You are doing a very good job. Thanks for all your work, it makes learning fun and easy for kids & parents.*

*This is an excellent program and it really pleases me to see the school's involvement and concern outside of the classroom.*

*Great job guys! We all loved it. You even kept my littlest child involved. Thank you!*

*Les doy las gracias por dar estos cursos, porque son muy importantes que tambien las mamás y papás sepan todo sobre la escuela. Gracias.* (Thank you for these courses, because it is important that the mums and dads know all there is to know about school)

### **Supporting literacy learning at home.**

The central idea behind the family literacy events is to help parents understand their children's literacy development and provide them with the tools they need to actively assist in this process. To accomplish this goal schools have adopted a variety of strategies and activities ranging from those with a specific focus on literacy to others that relate to more general parenting techniques or ways to offer support. Our work with literacy specialists and our research into the ways in which are schools are promoting literacy with families have lead us to consider broader, holistic accounts of what counts as literacy (Gallego & Hollingsworth, 2000). From this perspective, first, we find schools are working extremely hard to help families understand the processes involved in reading development and academic literacies through the provision of explanations and hands-on literacy activities. These tend to focus on the following kinds of activities:

- Providing information and activities concerning pre reading and basic reading skills grounded in scientific research on these aspects
- Presentations to parents on how and why to read to children with a focus promoting reading fluency and comprehension
- Engaging parents and children in read-alouds, choral, shared and paired readings to strengthen comprehension and build vocabulary
- Helping parents understand and promote phonemic awareness drawing on simplified reports or summaries from research
- Engaging families in readers' theatre
- Teachers sharing and modelling strategies for reading and related early literacy activities with young children

A common feature at over 87% of schools is to provide parents with material resources that enable them to continue literacy and learning at home. These include handouts with recommendations and suggestions for extension activities, tips and 'how-to' booklets, calendars and organizational tools, take-home stories, Keep Books, folder-games, and materials on loan from the library for reading and learning English such as the Leap-frog pads.

Second, we find that schools are maximizing opportunities to engage families in other kinds of literacies, related in particular to their communities and generally providing families with the additional resources to 'read and interpret' the world they live in. Such events include visits or presentations from guest speakers such as community leaders, librarians, educators and language specialists. Other activities used to enrich the family literacy programs have included: promoting opportunities for writing and comprehension activities with families and parents; presenting an author study; family game nights; puppet making; offering adult ESL classes; adult book clubs; Family Book Fairs; general parent education; and informational classes about school and school services such as "How to help your child succeed" workshops aimed at helping parents prepare for teacher conferences and interpret school reports.

Further areas addressed through family literacy to promote learning at home include: helping parents develop an atmosphere for study and learning at home, assigning "home-work" that builds on the activity or content of a particular family literacy event, arranging visits to the local libraries and facilitating the acquisition of public library cards for families, presenting technology such as "Light Span" to promote literacy and other areas of learning, and offering suggestions on how parents and children can watch TV together. Finally, many schools acknowledged that events designed around meal times and sharing food with the families -- spaghetti dinners, an evening meal or snacks sponsored by a local businesses-- are highly successful. Through an immense range of activities schools are facilitating parents' understanding of the ways in which they can promote and encourage their children's learning

out of school and at home. One parent summarized her participation at an evening event:

*I really enjoyed going to the family literacy night. Reading the story and viewing the slides that went along with the book was great, and then separating into groups to do an activity related to the story was very enjoyable for my son and daughter, as well as for me. Thank you.*

Another parent noted:

*My child talked about what we did for several days and loved the interactive activities of the event the best.*

A pattern emerges whereby we find schools maximizing family literacy programs and promoting home-school partnerships as “caring educational environments”, a sense of what Epstein (2002) refers to as “school-like families” and “family-like schools”, where parents become active participants in their children’s literacy, reading and language development. Evidence for these claims is found in parents’ favorable assessments of schools’ and literacy specialists’ endeavors. Over two thirds acknowledged that schools have offered more opportunities for families to attend literacy events during the past year compared to previous years. Still more significantly, three quarters of all parents report that they have a clearer understanding of their children’s developing reading skills as a result of their participation at the family literacy events. Likewise, 75% report that as parents they are better able to help their children with their literacy development after participating in these events and 75 % of all parents agreed with the statement that the family literacy activities appear to relate to their child’s classroom instruction.

### **Reflections**

In highlighting both complexities and success stories involved when schools reach out to engage families, we have focused mainly on the organizational aspects and practical issues related to family literacy programs. In so doing, we have not addressed the other side of this complex process – the professional development that prepares and nurtures the literacy specialists and others involved. In closing, it is important to

acknowledge that preparing professionals to engage the families of the children they teach and work with on a daily basis is a crucial part of teacher education. When we can see whole children, as family and community members, we are better able to understand the potentials and possibilities that emerge when families are actively involved in their children’s learning. When we view education as a collaborative, reciprocal process, we learn to think about schools as places and people who too, have much to learn from families. These are, perhaps, keys to promoting and sustaining culturally relevant and meaningful education in our increasingly diverse society.

(1. Light Span is an interactional, learning software that runs on Sony Playstation One, and hence does not require a computer, but instead is portable and connects to any television with video sockets.)

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See also: [www.nrea.org](http://www.nrea.org) for a list of activities and related links

## THE PARENT INSTITUTE: A CULTURAL CONSIDERATION

By Claire L. Tredwell, College of Education

Parents as partners in education is a concept that highly correlates to academic achievement of low-income students and those considered at risk for school failure (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001; National Institute of Education, 1985). The advantages of involving parents directly in the learning experiences of their children are: (a) increased student achievement, (b) improved school-community relationship, and (c) respected support for school programs (Berger, 1995). A continued need exists for parents to be included in a variety of school functions and learning experiences aside from traditional fundraising campaigns or field trips (Pena, 2000). Taking the first step in addressing the cultural barriers that have hindered parents from diverse groups in participating in their child's American school experience is critical (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995).

For example, in Las Vegas, Mexican American families choose to participate in their children's education and request training sessions that will assist them in motivating their child to improve academic skill areas. Some teachers have used parent participation in the classroom as motivators for their students (Pena, 2000). Training parents to work with children provides a positive impact in several areas. Parents tend to develop self-assertiveness toward continuing their own education, teachers gain support, and students show achievement (Henderson, 1988). Involving parents in the decision-making process at a school is an important step that typically follows the development of strong initial relationships (Henderson, 1988). Families need guidance from teachers on how to become more involved; however, teachers receive little training on implementing effective, collaborative skills with parents (Moles, 1993).

The Parent Institute, at Paradise Professional Development School on UNLV campus, is a community involvement program designed to include all parents in their child's learning experience and provide the resources needed to assist teachers and parents with the

educational needs of the family. Many of the families are Mexican American and English Language Learners (ELL). The specific objectives of the Parent Institute, which is partially funded through the government Title I budget, are: (a) to conduct training institutes that focus on cultural needs of the family in order to improve literacy and language development, (b) to provide parents and their children modeled strategies that can be implemented at home in order to develop skills for life, (c) to involve community resources that are important to the family structure, and (d) to assess and reflect continuously on the changing dynamics of the school community and the families served. The Parent Institute sessions revolve around identified problem areas in reading, language, math, social, and community concerns. Three major institutes are held each year for three hours. Parents and their children have the opportunity to attend training sessions that address their individual needs and respect their cultural background. Teachers, staff, pre-service teachers and faculty from UNLV, parents, and other community members participate in organizing and implementing the Parent Institutes.

An outcome objective goal of the Parent Institute is for the staff to develop a cultural understanding that leads to research based strategies for teaching diverse learners. In addition, parent participation and feedback at the Parent Institute indicates that future sessions may need to focus on parent involvement in writing a *needs assessment* outline for the school community. The importance of continuous parent contact and communication can increase parent involvement and student achievement (Watkins, 1997). Requiring a concentration of study on the effects of diverse cultures and family environments can best help educators to improve the academic and social outcomes of students from racial-minority groups, students at risk, and students with disabilities (Desimone, 1999; Epstein, 1992; Schneider, 1996). Establishing effective parent involvement programs where parents develop a strong contact and communication with the school fosters a trust and improved parent participation (Feuerstein, 2000). Working collaboratively to develop a Parent Institute that exhibits a welcomed atmosphere and celebration

of diversity can guarantee educational gains for students, parents, and staff.

A basic format that can be utilized when designing parent training and collaboration programs should contain the following: (a) a committee composed of six to eight teachers, three to five parents, one administrator, and two community members, (b) a working outline that addresses the needs of families in the school community, (c) an agenda of needs for school improvement and student achievement, (d) a time frame for implementing teacher and parent training sessions, and (e) a budget outlining costs for materials, personnel, and any additional items. Open communication between all committee members is important to the overall success of the Parent Institute. The school staff and parents need to understand that parent involvement in a child's home instruction is considered one of the most important forms of parent participation in education (Watkins, 1997). The Parent Institute is one community experience that builds a cultural bridge between home and school while providing the necessary tools parents need in order to enhance their child's educational experience.

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## 50 YEARS AFTER BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION

By Porter Lee Troutman, Jr., College of Education

Fifty years after the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, segregation of schools has continued to increase. In a recent study by Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee (January 2004) entitled, *Brown At 50: King's Dream or Plessy's Nightmare*. Orfield and Lee noted that this year of celebration should give us an opportunity to think about what we have learned, to look as closely as possible at both the gains brought about by school desegregation and the reality of the ground that has been lost in the last generation as schools are increasingly resegregating.

The most hopeful sign of a new recognition of the enduring importance of the principles in Brown came in the sweeping language of the Supreme Court's most important civil rights decision in a generation: the June 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision upholding affirmative action in higher education. Justice O'Connor's majority opinion concluded that "numerous studies show that student body diversity promotes learning outcomes, and 'better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society, and better prepares them as professionals.'" "These benefits," she concluded, "are not theoretical but real, as major American businesses have made clear that the skills needed in today's increasingly global marketplace can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints . . . What is more, high-ranking retired officers and civilian leaders of the United States military assert that, '[b]ased on [their] decades of experience,' a 'highly qualified, racially diverse officer corps . . . is essential to the military's ability to fulfill its principle mission to provide national security.' . . . To fulfill its mission, the military . . . must train and educate a highly qualified, racially diverse officer corps in a racially diverse setting.' We agree that '[i]t requires only a small step from this analysis to conclude that our country's other most selective institutions must remain both diverse and selective."

The Court strongly reaffirmed some of the basic goals of *Brown v. Board of Education* in its 2003 decision. It writes: "We have repeatedly acknowledged the overriding importance of preparing students for work and citizenship, describing education as pivotal to 'sustaining our political and cultural heritage' with a fundamental role in maintaining the fabric of society. *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U. S. 202, 221 (1982). This Court has long recognized that 'education . . . is the very foundation of good citizenship.' *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U. S. 483, 493 (1954). For this reason, the diffusion of knowledge and opportunity through public institutions of higher education must be accessible to all individuals regardless of race or ethnicity. Effective participation by members of all racial and ethnic groups in the civic life of our Nation is essential if the dream of one Nation, indivisible, is to be realized." " . . . diminishing the force of such stereotypes is both a crucial part of the Law School's mission, and one that it cannot accomplish with only token numbers of minority students. Just as growing up in a particular region or having particular professional experiences is likely to affect an individual's views, so too is one's own, unique experience of being a racial minority in a society, like our own, in which race unfortunately still matters."

The Court's decision in *Grutter*, was not, of course, about public K-12 schools but it was about the compelling need for integrated institutions in a profoundly multiracial society, and the legitimacy of taking race into account to achieve the goal of integration needed to obtain the benefits of diversity for all students. It explicitly relied upon and built upon the logic of *Brown*, not as something that was over, but as a living basic principle of American life. It went beyond *Brown* in finding successful integration a necessity for the American economic system and even national security. The Supreme Court had said nothing so positive about the compelling necessity of interracial education for three decades. The *Grutter* decision assured colleges and universities of their ability to pursue affirmative action, but also expressed the hope that improvements in lower levels of education would make such policies unnecessary within 25 years.

Ironically, however, rapid resegregation is denying equal opportunities to pre-college students and deepening the inequalities of their preparation. Moreover, the statistics required by the No Child Left Behind Act are dramatically documenting these inequalities by identifying "failing" schools, which all too often are schools segregated by race and poverty. It will be very important for courts and policy makers to face up to this contradiction in the coming years. It will surely resonate in the next round of decisions and arguments about the compelling need for diversity in our public schools, which educate a vastly larger share of our population than our colleges.

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Grutter v. Bollinger, 123 S.Ct. 2325 (2003).

## STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES FROM HIGH-NEED COMMUNITIES

By Nancy M. Sileo and Keri L. Altig,  
College of Education

Nevada's young children, from high-need communities need educational opportunities and supports. Clark County qualifies as a high-need community based on part (b) of the statutory definition of a high-need community: "a political subdivision of a State that is among the 10 percent of political subdivisions of the State having the greatest numbers of those children." (Section 2151(e)(9)(B) of the ESEA.).

Nevada's Kids Count (2003) reported the population of children ages' birth to four in Clark County as 110,658 in 2001. The racial distribution for young children in Clark County was reported as: 49% Caucasian, 32% Hispanic, 12% African American, 6% Asian and 1% American Indian (2003 Nevada Kids Count Data Book, 2003). Over 70% (62,305) of children living in poverty in Nevada live in Clark County ((2003 Nevada Kids Count Data Book, 2003). Moreover, 14% of children in Clark County live in poverty. The distribution of

children living in poverty, by race, are as follows: 28.9% African American, 19.4% Hispanic, 17.6% American Indian, 10.9% Caucasian, and 8.3% Asian. Concomitantly, approximately 4200 children entering kindergarten in CCSD in 2003 were English Language Learners (ELL).

CCSD has 131 eligible Title I school and serves the Title I population at 52 of those schools. Twenty-eight of the Title I schools have opted to serve the preK population. These Title I preK programs serve about 1000 young children aged three and four per year. In addition to the Title I preK programs, CCSD has 217 ECSE programs. Twenty-eight of these ECSE programs are in Title I eligible schools. Approximately 4300 children are served in ECSE programs district wide.

The majority of young children in high-need areas are "at-risk" for developmental delay or school failure. The term "at-risk" is used to refer to that class of young children (birth to age five) who have been exposed to any one of a number of medical or environmental factors that may contribute to a later developmental disability or school failure.

Families are the first offense to preventing young children from experiencing school failure. Working collaboratively with families from "high need" is one way to prevent young children from experiencing school failure. The following are things to consider when working with families of children in "high-need" communities.

1. do all early childhood staff members have a commitment to and skill in communicating with families from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles, and knowledge of family systems, and needs?
2. are family members encouraged to become involved in all aspects of programming, decision making, goal setting, implementation, and evaluations?
3. does the program provide a wide range of opportunities for families to become involved in culturally appropriate ways (e.g., observation, participation in planning, activities, lessons and assessment, implementation of strategies?)
4. are services for families **individualized** so the specific needs and concerns,

priorities, and resources of each family are addressed; and the family characteristics (e.g., cultural background, language spoken, socioeconomic level, values, and priorities) are considered and respected?

5. do staff members focus on children's and families' strengths, priorities, and resources rather than view them from a deficit model?
6. does the program have a well-defined procedure for identifying family needs and establishing a working partnership with parents?
7. do staff members view the family as a system so that the early childhood program strategies take into consideration the dynamics of the entire family, not merely the child or the child and one parent?
8. are parents supported to experience positive relationships with their children and competency in their parenting roles?
9. does the early childhood program enable and support parents to assume the various roles that they are required to play?
10. are various types of services provided by the early childhood program - general information, support, education and training, support in parent-child interactions, and help in using community resources?
11. does the program actively coordinate with other community agencies that provide services to families so that families are able to procure the range of services they may need (e.g., respite, financial, and health insurance, among other things)?
12. does everyone on the staff treat families with respect and remember that parents know their children better than anyone else and that parents are the **experts** on their own children

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION ITEMS

### 2004 National NOW Conference

2004 National Organization for  
Women Conference  
July 16-18, 2004  
Riviera Hotel and Casino  
Las Vegas, NV

Events include;  
Annual Political Institute  
2004 Women of courage award  
2004 Women of Vision award  
Entertainment by Cris Williamson

### AIDS Walk Las Vegas April 18, 2004

This is about action.  
This is about making  
a difference.  
This is about the Push to Walk.  
Signup now at:  
[www.afanlv.org](http://www.afanlv.org) or call:  
702/382-2326

**14th Annual International  
NAME Conference**

2004 National Association for  
Multicultural Education Conference  
"Unmasking the Legacy of the  
Brown Decisions Through  
Multicultural Education"  
October 27-31, 2004  
Hyatt Regency Crown Center  
Kansas City

**GLSEN**, or the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Established nationally in 1995, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. For more information log on to [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).

**GLSEN Southern Nevada  
Upcoming Events**

**Day of Silence** - April 21, 2004: Students take a nine hour vow of silence to recognize and protest the harassment, prejudice, and discrimination that GLBT people face.

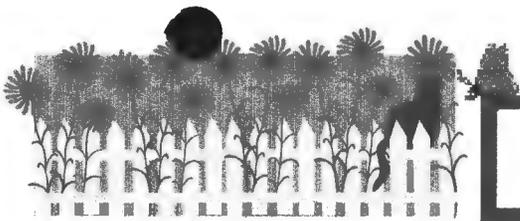
◇ **About the Day of Silence.**

The Day of Silence, a project of GLSEN in collaboration with the United States Student Association (USSA), is a student-led day of action where those who support making anti-LGBT bias unacceptable in schools take a day-long vow of silence to recognize and protest the discrimination and harassment experienced by LGBT students and their allies. For more information log on to [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org).

**Laramie Project** - April 22-24, 29-30; May 01, 2004: A theatrical portrayal about Matthew Shepard that explores the depth to which humanity can sink, and the heights of compassion of which we are also capable.

**Back 2 School** - October 2004; Second annual Back 2 School event will gather and spread information about safe schools & resources in the school district and the community.

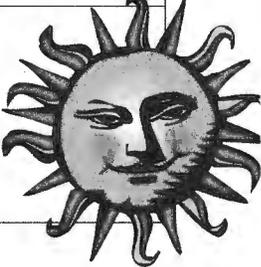
**National Coming Out Day (NCOD)** - October 2004: Spread the resources available on coming out and how to deal with GLBT issues in the classroom and in schools.

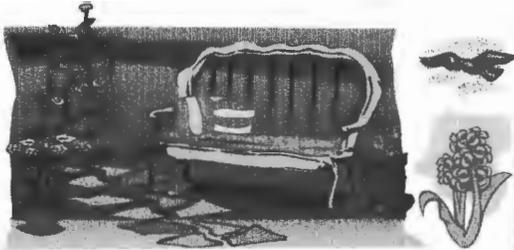


# March 2004



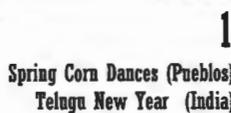
*What is tolerance? It is the consequence of humanity. We are all formed of frailty and error; let us pardon reciprocally each other's folly - that is the first law of nature. — Voltaire*

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<p><b>1</b></p> <p>Peace Corps established 1961 Ralph Ellison, 1919-1994</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Texan Independence from Mexico 1836 Puerto Rico becomes US territory, 1917</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Indian Appropriations Act, 1885 Doll Festival, Japan</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>Knute Rockne 1888-1931</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Crispus Attucks Day</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>Fall of the Alamo 1836 Purim begins at sundown</p>
<p><b>7</b></p> <p>Purim</p> 	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>International Women's Day</p> 	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>Antonia Novello, 1st woman &amp; 1st Latino surgeon general, 1990</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>Harriet Tubman died, 1913 Hallie Q Brown, Black teacher &amp; women's leader, 1850-1949</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> 	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>Gabriele d'Annunzio, 1863-1938</p>	<p><b>13</b></p> 
<p><b>14</b></p> <p>Albert Einstein 1879-1955</p> 	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 1933- Eugene Marino, 1st black Archbishop appointed 1988</p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>Freedom's Journal, 1st black newspaper in US, 1827</p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>St Patrick's Day</p> 	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>Hawaii admitted to Union, 1959 (50th state)</p> 	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>St Joseph's Day, Italy</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Toms Cabin published 1852 Vernal Equinox: 1st Day of Spring</p>
<p><b>21</b></p> <p>Benito Juárez, Mexican leader 1806-1872 New Year (India) Namibia Independence 1990</p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p>Emancipation Day, Puerto Rico</p>	<p><b>23</b></p> 	<p><b>24</b></p> <p>Canada gives blacks right to vote 1837</p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p>Seward's Day, Alaska</p>	<p><b>26</b></p> <p>Kuhio Day (Hawaii)</p> 	<p><b>27</b></p> <p>1st Mormon temple dedicated 1836 Marconi sends 1st international wireless message 1899</p>
<p><b>28</b></p> 	<p><b>29</b></p> 	<p><b>30</b></p> <p>US purchased Alaska from Russia, 1867</p>	<p><b>31</b></p> <p>César Chávez 1927-1993</p> 	<p>My spirit was never in jail. — César Chávez</p>		



# April 2004

THE MOTTO SHOULD NOT BE: FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER;  
 RATHER, UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER.  
 — EMMA GOLDMAN

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	We could never learn to be brave and patient, if there were only joy in the world. — Helen Keller					
4 Palm Sunday Daylight savings time begins	5 Booker T. Washington 1865-1915	6 Alexander Herzenn 1812-1870 Peary & Henson reach North Pole in 1909	7 Billie Holiday 1915-1959 	8 Buddha's Birthday 563-483 BC 	9 Civil War ended Treaty of Appomattox 1865 African Methodist Episcopal Church est. 1816	10 Dolores Huerta 1940- Joseph Pulitzer 1847-1911 Buchenwald Liberation Day 1945
11 Easter Sunday 	12 Civil War began 1861 Yuri Gargarin, 1st person to orbit earth, 1961	13 Tamil New Year Lucy Laney, black educator 1854-1933	14 Abraham Lincoln killed 1865 Pan American Day 1st US abolition society 1775	15 Jackie Robinson played for Brooklyn Dodgers, 1947 	16 Mary Eliza Mahoney, 1st black nurse 1845-1926	17 World Health Day 
18 Holocaust Remembrance Day 	19 Revolutionary War began 1775	20 	21 Spanish-American War began 1898	22 Earth Day US Holocaust Museum opened 1993 	23 	24 
25 United Nations founded 1945 Ella Fitzgerald 1918-1996 	26 1st Democratic elections in South Africa 1994 Syngman Rhee 1875-1965	27 Coretta Scott King 1927- Eritrea independence from Ethiopia 1993	28 Canada/US sign Goodwill treaty 1817	29 Emperor's Bday, Japan Dnke Ellington 1899-1974 St. Catherine's Day, Italy	30 Louisiana Territory purchased 1803 Loyalists & blacks attacked Shresbury, NJ 1780	Calendar created by Karla V. Kingsley