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Editorial Introduction

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An On-line Journal
for Teacher Research

Editorial Introduction

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The Spring 2011 issue of *Networks* offers a rich variety of articles to our readers. Touching on technology, movement in classrooms and multicultural competence the three lead articles ask educator to both consider instructional practices of the future and to reflect on the cultural knowledge that we do and do not bring to classrooms. In all three articles, readers are asked to rethink some of their assumptions about what happens in classrooms and what we need to consider as we make decisions about classroom practices.

In the article “Podcasting in a High School Spanish Language Class to Improve the Speaking Skill: An Action Research Study,” Maggie Brennan Juana, a classroom teacher, and Deniz Palak, a college professor, team up to explore podcasting as a tool for helping students gain oral speaking skills in Spanish at the secondary level. In this study, the researchers documented the ways Juana’s students used the *gcast* (www.gcast.com) - a website that enabled the students and their teacher to prepare and share weekly podcasts. Students recorded their podcasts over the phone. Recordings were then uploaded to an online podcasting site, where the teacher-researcher had created a secure account for student use. Students could then download the podcasts of other students. This paper documents a teacher-created use of technology that addresses a genuine challenge – having students practice speaking Spanish - that Juana faced as a high school language teacher.

An article by Carrie Braniff, takes us into a fourth grade classroom where she explores the role movement can play in implementing effective classroom management and improving student

motivation and attentiveness. In “Perceptions of an Active Classroom: Exploration of Movement and Collaboration With Fourth Grade Students,” Braniff documents several changes she made in her classroom that provided children with multiple opportunities for movement. Her research documents the effect these changes had on her students and argues that providing students with opportunities to move can result in positive changes in classroom climate. Her article demonstrates the power of teacher research to explore possibilities and refine new practices.

Our final article takes on the significant issue of multicultural competence. As Bifuh-Ambe and Paula Burnes report “There is an urgent need to prepare teachers to effectively meet the needs of diverse students in classrooms across the USA.” In this paper, pre-service teacher Paula Burnes, with the support of her professor, reflects on her “Minority Experience” a field-based experience completed as an assignment for a course on multicultural education. In this assignment students were required to choose an activity that placed them in a minority situation for a minimum of three hours. Bifuh-Ambe’s students might visit black churches, gay nightclubs, cultural festivals, or beauty shops specializing in non-Caucasian hairstyles. Bifuh-Ambe has found this assignment to be particularly effective in “helping students apply the theories learned in the classroom, explore their feelings towards others not like themselves, and come to terms with their deepest, often unacknowledged stereotypes” (p. 4). In the account presented in this paper, we accompany Burnes on a recent visit to a Native American Powwow.

This issue of Networks also features book reviews of *Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation* written by Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan L. Lytle and reviewed by Jen Scott Curwood and a review of *Leading Lesson Study: A Practical Guide for Teachers and Facilitators* written by Jennifer Stepanek et al. and reviewed by Jay A. Babcock.

Please consider Networks as an option for publishing teacher research you may be involved in or for students who are interested in seeking an outlet for their teacher research projects. We welcome submissions from practicing teachers – preschool through higher education – who are involved in analyses of their own practices. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.