Editor's Foreword

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

This special issue of Educational Considerations focuses on emergent challenges and promising practices in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse [CLD] students in public schools, especially those in ESL classrooms. This segment of school populations is the fastest growing in the United States (NCTAF, 1997). Students of cultural and linguistic diversity bring to the school very differential needs which demand thoughtful and reflective approaches. Indeed, CLD students are: (a) three times more likely to be improperly classified as low achievers, (b) two times more likely to be at least one grade level behind in school, and (c) four times more likely to drop out than their native-English-speaking counterparts (USCRC, 1997). This exploration of the issues which surround these students and English as a Second Language [ESL] begins with a look at the sociocultural context of education for CLD students.

Cathy Escamilla's lead article on the False Dichotomy between ESL and Transitional Bilingual programs reminds us of the sociocultural, sometimes politically charged, context of ESL and Bilingual Education [BLED]. This context tends to be the impetus behind a number of educationally detrimental concerns which she discusses, including: the hegemonic nature of student labels such as LEP, reductionistic approaches to programming for CLD students, and the so-called *early exit* solution to perceived language deficiencies among CLD students. Cathy concludes by detailing the need to better prepare, not just ESL/BLED, but *all* teachers for the differential learning/adjustment needs of CLD students.

Amy Beckett's review of ESL issues which remain unknown and unresolved in standards-based assessment italicizes the inaccurate pictures of school and system success which can result from the exclusion of Language Learning [LL] students from these assessments. She offers discussion of selected accommodations appropriate for LL students in the conduct of such assessments.

The findings of the qualitative study undertaken by Kevin Murry and Socorro Herrera indicate that postgraduate programs in long-term professional development which focus on capacity building for reflective practice can purposively enhance teachers' personal and collective sense of efficacy in practice. This is particularly true where collaboration in meeting the challenges of classroom diversity is encouraged.

Analyses by Otherine Neisler and Alyssa Nota remind us that the many challenges which LL students face in schooling are not just linguistic, but also cultural, including both micro- and macro- cultural adjustments. These challenges impact the difficulties that growing numbers of Hispanic students face in their educational experiences.

The school restructuring piece written by Commins, Miramontes, and Nadeau highlights informed decision making as the key to successful programming for linguistically diverse students. While the article by Gomez and Gomez emphasizes the need for native language support provisions in such programming.

David and Yvonne Freeman's conceptual piece illustrates that effective teachers engage students in the investigation of significant and relevant questions. Such a process is one through which students can also develop emergent literacy skills in both their second and primary languages. The contribution of Cathy Gutierrez-Gomez highlights one way to do this; that is through the telling and retelling of stories.

The appropriate professional development of teachers and other educators for increasing classroom diversity is the focus of the article provided by Socorro Herrera and Robert Fanning. For them, such development should be ongoing, reflective, theory and research driven.

The cutting-edge, qualitative research subsequently discussed by Leila Flores-Dueñas concludes that second language learners, as inquirers about their own literacy, tend to exhibit powerful, new metacognitive capabilities including a capacity for critical thinking about their own reading development. Concomitantly, such inquiry may serve as a vehicle for enhancing teacher-student connections.

In closing this special ESL Issue of Educational Considerations, Della Ruth Perez provides readers with a review of useful and purposive resources extant on the World Wide Web. These resources offer point and click support to educators who are addressing the many challenges of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the public schools.

Issues of student diversity are increasingly relevant to each of us as educators. We wish to extend special thanks to Dr. David Thompson for the opportunity to address them in this Special Issue. The indefatigable contributions of Cristina Fanning, Susan Erichsen, Joe Fanning, Della Perez and Mary Hammel in Journal preparation are also gratefully acknowledged.

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The correct order of authorship should have been: Campbell, Charles R.; Campbell, Patti C.; and Brady, Michael P. Building-based Decision