LOOKING INTO THE INSTITUTIONAL MIRROR: WAYS TO PROMOTE VALIDATING PRACTICES AND POLICIES IN EDUCATION FOR LATINA/O/X STUDENTS

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Presentation to UC Sacramento
THE EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY OF ONE INLAND EMPIRE STUDENT—
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• Imagine...

• How can education be leveraged to transform the life trajectories of our young people, especially Latina/o/x students and other youth of color in our public schools?
STARTING FROM AN ADDITIVE PERSPECTIVE

“BEFORE YOU ANNOUNCE, YOU MUST DENOUNCE.”—PAULO FREIRE

Denouncing

- Blaming & “othering”
- Deficit perspectives
- Low expectations
- “Test-Prep Pedagogy” (Rodríguez, 2008)
- Poverty and race are not deterministic
- Failing “public” narrative

Announcing

- Teachers/mentors/role models matter
- Cultural wealth matters (Yosso, 2005)
- Recognition matters
- Students’ voices & experiences matter
- Leadership, policy, & practice matters
- Equity & social justice must be deliberate
THE MIRROR/ESPEJO AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL…

- How can educators use the mirror as a tool to engage with our students, families, and communities?
PREVENTING OUR BRILLIANCE...LONG BEFORE THE HEALTH PANDEMIC

Silencing Students/Communities
Discrimination & Exclusion
Cultural Erasure
Racism
Zero-tolerance Policies
Deficit Thinking
Shortage of Teachers/Mentors of Color
Absent Relationships

Testing Culture
Low Expectations
Historical Injustices
Irrelevant Curriculum

Brilliance of their:
Self
Family
Community
History
Ancestors

Policy—Curriculum—Pedagogy—Practice
EARLY WORK: A FOCUS ON INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

10-Point Plan to Reduce Dropout & Promote Student Engagement

- Dialoguing
- Promoting Students’ Voices
- Youth as Intellectuals
- Promoting Pedagogies of Recognition
- Community Relevant Pedagogy
- Listening to Canaries in the Classroom
- Making Public Schools “Public”
- Relationships
- Excellence Campaigns

Excellence Work...

Lever 1: Leadership

Excellence is Contagious

Excellence is about Equity & Social Justice

Lever 2: Community Engagement

Excellence is Inherently Additive

Excellence as Curriculum & Pedagogy

Lever 3: Contextual Mindfulness

Excellence is Politically Viable

Lever 4: Process-Outcome Orientation

Excellence is a Responsibility

RECENT QUESTION...

- How do Latina/o/x youth describe, define, & experience excellence in their homes, schools, & communities?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thought question</th>
<th>Practice Implications</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Validation theory (Rendon, 1994)</td>
<td>How are students validated in the classroom?</td>
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<td>Funds of Knowledge (Moll, et al)</td>
<td>What funds of knowledge do our students bring education?</td>
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<td>Pedagogies of the Home (Delgado Bernal, 2002)</td>
<td>In what ways do students exercise their resilience? How have they resisted unfairness, injustice, &amp; inequality?</td>
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<td>In what ways does your curriculum recognize the existence of Latina/o/x students?</td>
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THE CREER PROJECT

Educational Journeys

History of Educational Inequality

Loteria Project

Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005)

Photovoice Projects on Excellence

How do Latina/o/x youth describe, define, & experience excellence in their homes, schools, & communities?
CONTEX

Site: “Aguirre” High School

A high school on the West Coast
2,213 students
90% socioeconomically disadvantaged
90%+Predominantly Latina/o/x students

Participants

9th grade AVID class
"Ms. Alvarado“ (Latina English/AVID teacher)
31 students/predominantly Latinx
Key Findings:
1) Group success via AVID-type programs
2) Individual academic success—role of siblings
3) Separation/loss
4) Teacher support
5) Family
6) Movimiento
“...the picture gives off the impression of being lost and I have to navigate around the place to find the correct path that will lead me to success” (Joan’s, Photovoice Project).

“This is an important picture to me because it shows that in a small town in Mexico, people are still good and kind, despite of how people in the U.S. paint them to be” (Joan’s, Photovoice Project).

Key Findings:
1) Community
2) Family
3) Embracing excellence
4) Academic
FINDINGS—LOTERIA PROJECTS

Findings
-excellence is seeing someone doing it (sister)
excellence is witnessing self-less effort &
sacrifice for one’s family
-familismo
-self-determination
-consciousness of the other/community
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<th>Validation theory (Rendon, 1994)</th>
<th>How are students validated in the classroom?</th>
<th>Every student’s presence is affirmed &amp; validated.</th>
<th>“You belong here”; “We need you here”; “Your families need you here”; “Your community needs you here”; “Your ancestors need you here”</th>
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<td>Funds of Knowledge (Moll, et al)</td>
<td>What funds of knowledge do our students bring education?</td>
<td>Student voices are centered in the learning dynamic; students are cultivated as leaders at all levels.</td>
<td>Develop student voice forums in schools &amp; classrooms; consistent feedback loop for educators &amp; leaders;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogies of the Home (Delgado Bernal, 2002)</td>
<td>In what ways do students exercise their resilience? How have they resisted unfairness, injustice, &amp; inequality?</td>
<td>Student resilience is not an illness &amp; resistance is not defiance; students’ homes, families, and communities are sources of strength</td>
<td>Build a culture of knowledge co-construction in schools &amp; classrooms; if teachers can co-construct knowledge, they will teach their students to do the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005)</td>
<td>What forms of linguistic capital do Latina/o/x students bring to the classroom?</td>
<td>Students and their families and communities have always navigated multiple spaces &amp; institutions; we should capitalize on their skills, knowledge, &amp; lessons learned in education</td>
<td>How are students’ forms of community cultural wealth validated within the schooling space?</td>
</tr>
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<td>Praxis of Recognition (Rodriguez, 2012)</td>
<td>In what ways does your curriculum recognize the existence of Latina/o/x students?</td>
<td>Student must be recognized holistically in terms of relationships, curriculum, pedagogy, context, &amp; goals/aspirations.</td>
<td>Every student should be recognized within the education space; relationships &amp; mentoring require investment</td>
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CLEARING THE SMOKE FOR OUR BRILLIANCE...

Equitable Policies

Funds of Knowledge

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Pedagogies of the Home

Family Engagement Recognition

Learning Over Testing

Ethnic Studies

Education

Of

Going

Recognizing

Cultural

Wealth

Purpose

Affirming Culture, Language, & History

High Expectations & Support

Community Relevant Curriculum

Meaningful Relationships

Honoring Student Voice

Pedagogies of Love

Policy—Curriculum—Pedagogy—Practice

Brilliance of their: Self Family Community History Ancestors
POLICY IMPLICATIONS

• Every educators should demonstrate a commitment to and understanding of equity

• Every educator should learn about additive frameworks especially when serving Communities of Color, English Learners, immigrants students, and others

• Every student should see themselves in the curriculum mirror

• Every policy should be vetted through an equity lens—who is the most marginalized person in your institution and how will they experience this policy?

• Every assessment effort should not just measure learning but creativity, compassion, progress

• Every Californian should know about excellent teachers, classrooms, and schools
  • Not just a narrative of “we did it” but this is how we did it
THE MIRROR/ESPEJO AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL...

• Latina/o/x students bring their skills, knowledge, and gifts. Will the institutional mirror show them who they are?
OUR EDUCATIONAL GOAL...

Academic Espejos...

Current System...

School/Academics

Brilliance

Sacrifice & Hard Work

Culture/Language

Family

Community Strength

History/Ancestors
ACADEMIC ESPEJOS (MIRRORS): PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE
Thank you!

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