

Dr. James A. Banks to Speak on Multicultural Education at Hazel Creekmore Symposium



Dr. James A. Banks, Russell F. Stark University Professor in Curriculum and Instruction, and Director, Center for Multicultural Education, University of Washington, Seattle will speak about Teaching for Multicultural Literacy, Global Citizenship, and Social Justice at the Hazel Creekmore Symposium on Wed., September 29 at 4:30 p.m. at Rice University. Dr. Banks is a leader in multicultural studies and has written extensively on multicultural and social studies education. He is editor of the *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (Jossey-Bass) and *Multicultural Education, Transformative Knowledge, and Action* (Teachers College Press). He also served as past president of the American Educational Research Association. (See page 2 for a review of *Diversity within Unity: Essential Principles for Teaching and Learning in a Multicultural Society* by James Banks, Peter Cookson, Geneva Gay, Willis Hawley, Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, Sonia Nieto, and Walter Stephan.)

Classroom Storytelling Project Brings ‘Outstanding’ Benefits to William Smith Head Start and Fort Bend ISD

by Bernie Mathes, School Literacy & Culture Project Director

"The Classroom Storytelling Project has been a tremendous help to our Head Start teachers. When I go into the classrooms, I can actually see the children reading." This is how Helen Wright, Executive Director of the William Smith Sr. Tri-County Child Development Head Start, began a conversation about the early literacy collaborations with her agency, the Fort Bend Independent School District, the University of Texas-Houston's Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (C.I.R.C.L.E.) and the Rice University Center for Education's School Literacy and Culture Project. Through a grant from the Texas Education Agency, twenty-nine teachers of three and four year-olds from the Head Start agency and the school district have participated in workshops on early literacy practices as presented by

C.I.R.C.L.E. and the Classroom Storytelling Project, which includes in-class mentoring, monthly seminars, and a weeklong Summer Institute on Reading, Writing and Cultural Connections.



Marsha Johnson, a Head Start teacher at E.A. Jones Elementary in Fort Bend ISD, takes a story from one of her students.

The collaboration has been quite successful. As Dr. Mary Jackson, Director of Special Projects for Fort Bend ISD, said, "We are so pleased to see an aligned approach to developing the language/literacy skills of our young learners from Head Start up through our early grades in the district. The Rice Classroom Storytelling Project fits beautifully into our district's K-3 literacy plan. The professional development for our prekindergarten teachers has been outstanding, and the benefits to our students have been great!" Recently, the other partners in the collaboration, Helen Wright; Glenda Harrison from C.I.R.C.L.E.; Mariette Bellamy, Curriculum Director at William Smith Tri-County; and myself, joined together to review the work we have done since January, 2003, in Fort Bend County. Excerpts from that conversation follow.

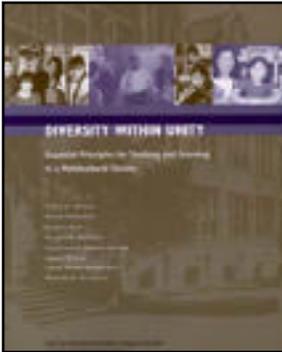
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Diversity Within Unity: Essential Principles for Teaching and Learning

by Connie Floyd, Cultural Conversations Director



Dr. James Banks and a panel of interdisciplinary scholars worked for over four years to develop a set of principles based on research and practice about education and diversity that can help teachers, school administrators, and other educational practitioners increase student academic achievement, improve intergroup skills, and understand the challenge and opportunity student diversity in schools provides.

James Banks defines multicultural education as an idea, as an educational reform movement, and as a process. As an idea, Banks writes that multicultural education seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all students by changing the total school environment so that it will reflect the diverse cultures and groups that make up our nation's classrooms.

As an educational reform movement, Banks describes multicultural education as reforms that try to ensure equal learning opportunities for students. Teaching strategies that empower all students and give them a voice are prime examples. Understanding multiple perspectives will allow students to see that historians, researchers, and textbook writers have written from their own perspectives.

As a process, Banks writes that multicultural education is a continuing process with its goals being ideals that teachers and administrators should constantly strive to achieve.

The panel concludes in their report, *Diversity Within Unity*, that powerful multicultural schools help students from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, and language groups to experience academic success. They emphasize that students must be competent in intergroup and civic skills to function effectively in today's complex and ethnically polarized nation and world. As idealistic as the principles may seem, they were written with the knowledge that intergroup conflicts exist but that meeting the challenge of diversity is worth the effort for everyone.

These principles were certainly written for urban schools struggling to meet the needs of their diverse populations. But increasingly suburban schools also need to value and learn from their growing diversity. I believe these principles should be used as a framework for effective multicultural education based on research and best practice. The Multicultural Education Consensus Panel organized their 12 essential principles into five categories: (1) Teacher learning, (2) Student learning, (3) Intergroup relations, (4) School governance, organization and equity, and (5) Assessment.

Teacher Learning

Principle 1: Professional development programs should help teachers understand the complex characteristics of ethnic groups within U.S. society and the ways in which race, ethnicity, language, and social class interact to influence student behavior.

Student Learning

Principle 2: Schools should ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to learn and to meet high standards.

Principle 3: The curriculum should help students understand that knowledge is socially constructed and reflects researchers' personal experiences as well as the social, political, and economic contexts in which they live and work.

James Banks defines multicultural education as an idea, as an educational reform movement, and as a process. As an idea, Banks writes that multicultural education seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all students by changing the total school environment so that it will reflect the diverse cultures and groups that make up our nation's classrooms.

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School Science & Technology Expands to Clear Creek, Pasadena, Hitchcock, and Dickinson ISD's

by Wallace Dominey, School Science & Technology Project Director

School Science & Technology has expanded to include Clear Creek, Pasadena, Hitchcock, and Dickinson ISD's. Project Director Wallace Dominey is teaching a course to grades 4-8 science teachers from these districts entitled the "Integration of Technology into Life Sciences Instruction." The course began with a one-week summer institute in August 2003 and continues with after-school meetings throughout the 2003-04 school academic year. Topics include the use of USB microscopes, digital cameras, and various teaching and productivity software as related to science instruction. Teachers are encouraged to use technology applications in their classrooms as these applications are learned. Teacher projects include everything from creating Jeopardy!® questions in Powerpoint® to creating online assessments using the School Science & Technology's assessment website (<http://schoolsdev.rice.edu/assessment/>).

Teacher participant Christine Hawthorne (Dunbar Middle School, Dickinson ISD) summarized the impact of the course on her this way: "I think the main thing this course has done for me is to give me confidence in the use of many different types of technology and applications. I had a working knowledge of computers, having taken numerous crash courses offered by various districts; however, it was always the same story. I sat for an hour or two, learned the process/application and then went home. I was living proof that 'what you don't use, you lose.' With this course, it has been different. Not only were we challenged to learn technology applications but we were also challenged to use them in our classroom. My students delighted in being my guinea pigs as I tried out all my newfound knowledge on them. They also seemed to enjoy thinking of me in the role of student and were willing to help me work out the kinks. This course has been a win/win situation for me and my students."

Several of the course participants presented "Taking the PowerPoint Plunge: Integrating Technology into Life Science Instruction" at the 2003 Texas Conference for the Advancement of Science Teaching on November 1, 2003. Presenters included Patty Manco (A.B. Freeman Elementary, PISD), Chuck Meredith (Weber Elementary, CCISD), Fran Rogstad (Stewart Elementary, Hitchcock ISD), Tammy Oldani (Ed White Elementary, CCISD), Christine Hawthorne (Dunbar Middle School, Dickinson ISD), and Carol Singletary (Dunbar Middle School, Dickinson ISD).

Part of the expansion into these new districts includes a focus on Stewart Elementary, CCISD. With support from Casey O'Pry, Stewart's principal, and Glynis Sawyer, CCISD Executive Director for Technology, five Stewart teachers (Molly Norman, Danae Reagan, Stacey Milam, Joyce Scott, and Sue McGlone) were able to participate in the technology integration course. In addition, the Stewart science lab was inventoried by Dominey and plans are underway to put this inventory online for quick item location and checkout.

The final component of the expansion includes an assessment of the kindergarten science curriculum on CD Rom created by the Rice Science & Technology/Aldine ISD Science Collaborative. The primary authors of the curriculum were Martha Borrowman and C.J. Thompson, Aldine Science Specialists, who were supervised by Linda Scott, Aldine ISD Elementary and Intermediate Science Program Director. Forty kindergarten teachers from Pasadena and Clear Creek ISD are participating in a study of the effectiveness of this curriculum in terms of increasing student science achievement. Participating teachers receive professional development and science materials to facilitate using an inquiry approach in kindergarten science instruction.

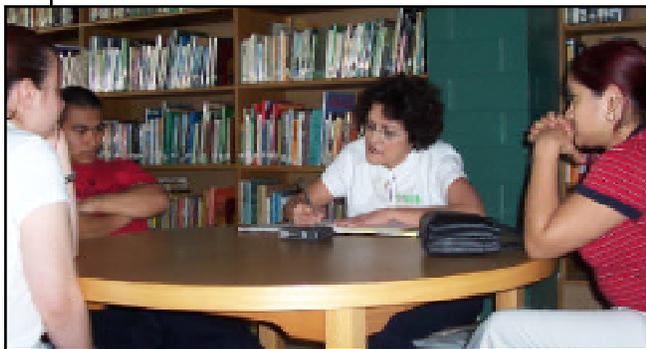


Christine Hawthorne (left) and Carol Singletary (right), teachers at Dunbar Middle School, Dickinson ISD, pose with 'Charles Darwin' at the Conference for the Advancement of Science Teaching in November, 2003.

Uncovering the Stories Behind the Dropout Rates

by Judy Radigan, Center for Education Researcher

As the fall school semester of 2003 drew to a close, I sat quietly in the back of the Furr High School library making notes on a student high school dropout presentation, part of a legislative project that included English and government students. The principal, Dr. Simmons, turned to one of the Senior English teachers with a suggestion, "Why don't we get a group of these kids together and really dig into dropouts?" Then Dr. Simmons included me as she asked, "Would you help me put that together presentation? Where they (the students) really speak. Would you and some Rice students help me with that?"



Judy Radigan interviews students at Lee High School for her research project.

Believing this was a valuable project, wondering where I would find the students, I replied, "Yes. This is something we need to do."

This study of dropouts comes at a time when Houston Independent School District is under national scrutiny for underreporting its dropout statistics. This project also reflects the increasing determination within Furr High School to graduate its students. With a minority population, 75% Latino and 23% African American, this school population is 90% low socio-economic status (SES). The principal

and the teachers want to help these students, who are all too familiar with the dropout phenomenon among their friends and families, to learn to generate reliable information and to represent it in a public forum.

The opportunity to pursue this study of dropouts at Furr has also opened up an extraordinary and unexpected opportunity for researchers at the Center for Education. Studying the dropout issue with the teachers and students who struggle with school leaving as part of their daily work has offered an inside experience into a complex problem. Furr has become a fertile laboratory for fledgling Rice undergraduate researchers as they can work under the guidance of Furr English teacher, Ms. Angela Borzon, and researchers from Rice University.

As the spring semester began, four student researchers, Esther Shaw, Habib Irshad, Etsuko Senoo, and Erin McEntee, joined me in facilitating a critical literacy project on dropouts in two junior English classes at Furr with the students and their teacher. Habib Irshad garnered an Envision Grant from Leadership Rice to facilitate the completion of the project. The Rice students and the Furr students and teacher would learn about ethnographic research on their feet by doing. However, a research project in the field is not without its obstacles.

Academic, social, and unscheduled activities forced us to navigate through fitful starts and stops. We began with small group discussions of current articles from the dropout research literature. Students from Rice and Furr evaluated the articles for similarities to their school situation and differences. As discussions progressed, the Furr students were surprised to learn that 85% of the students in their school were considered at-risk of dropping out. Students slowly told their own stories of brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers who had left school without graduating. Presentations of students' initial understanding of the research literature and their own experiences were interrupted with preparation for the state English test (TAKS).



Rice University education students, Esther Shaw (left), Habib Irshad, Etsuko Senoo, and Erin McEntee (not shown), were awarded an Envision Grant by Rice University to engage students at Furr High School in a study to develop a profile of the typical dropout student to present in a public forum at the end of the semester. Envision Grants are awarded to student projects whose goal is to effect a positive change in the community.

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Judy Radigan, Advocate for Children

by Laurie Hammons, Project Coordinator

Dr. Judy Radigan brings to the Center for Education research team extraordinary observation and analytical skills and a seemingly tireless determination to be an advocate for children in both her scholarly and community activities. Her special expertise in the education of immigrant children as well as children, schools, and communities on the margins has greatly expanded the capacity of the Center to focus its research on the educational experiences of our poorest youth. Through Dr. Radigan's publications and her hands-on participation in reforming schools, we learn much more about the barriers to these children's learning as well as coming to a much greater understanding of the enormous possibilities that reside in every child.

I first met Judy Radigan while working with our research team. Her intensity was what struck me right away, along with her high energy and enthusiasm. And this intensity is most often focused on students. She does not just ask, "What are they learning?" or "How are they helped by this latest reform?" She wants to understand the underlying question, "What sense do kids make of school?" She cares about the relevance of schooling to their lives. She pulls for them to make it – in school, as well as in the adult world they will soon face. The loss of so many dropouts each year is something she takes personally. As a researcher she does more than merely build a careful record of data; her day is full of activities that touch the lives of children. (See sidebar.)

Judy Radigan brings to the Center research team a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology in addition to her long experience in schools – as a parent of four and as a teacher of English, ESL, and Theater in the public schools of Houston and Alvin over a twenty-year period. In addition, she served as the principal of a private school. When our research team was charged to study the effects of a large school reform grant on its recipient schools, Judy's experiences called her to look not only at the big picture of school change, but also

for evidence that the reform was improving the education that their students obtained.

To make clear the ways we understand how reforms affect particular kids, she has written about "Irineo," a student who spent three years classified as a freshman. He was labeled a troublemaker, with little expectation (either from his teachers or himself) that he would graduate. But through involvement in the school's fine arts magnet program, created as an experiment by a faculty determined to reach kids whose abilities exceed performance, he gained leadership experience

Advocate in Motion

In addition to her research, Judy Radigan is involved with a dizzying number of projects. She teaches education classes at Rice. She says her Foundations of Education course is designed to encourage pre-service teachers to look past their preconceived attitudes about education to really see the possibilities of urban kids.

Because she is convinced that all teachers need a deep familiarity with diverse cultures, she offers Cultural Studies courses online through the University of Houston. She maintains a near-constant availability via email with her students, themselves classroom teachers.

Judy has also taught an ESL strategies course to Latino immigrants, in this case professionals in their former countries who are participating in a certification program to become bilingual teachers for HISD.

Her keen interest in the education of immigrants led Judy Radigan to observe and evaluate Even Start Programs that are opening up opportunities for young children and their parents in three HISD schools. She reported, "Parents participate in daily ESL and GED classes, learn activities to enhance the reading and math abilities of their children, and learn the dynamics of parenting in a new country with a changing value system."

Dr. Radigan is also a child advocate for the court system. She manages a research study of volunteers who find secure homes for abused and neglected children. She herself also acts as a volunteer advocate for two young boys who have been removed from their home.

and motivation to overcome low expectations. His senior year Irineo took a full load of courses, as well as classes before and after school, in order to graduate. His is not merely

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MS. BELLAMY: The collaboration validated our teachers. The Rice mentors come in and our teachers think, "I really am going in the right direction. I am doing something positive for these kids." And they're seeing the outcomes with the children. They really are making a difference; they're not just spinning their wheels. With C.I.R.C.L.E. as part of the project, Glenda has gone in and done a lot of validation as well and followed up.

After the mentor is there, the teacher makes a change. And then Glenda comes in and does an observation and says "Wow, look what you're doing."

MS. WRIGHT: When the mentors go out, they demonstrate first, showing how this is to be done. The teachers actually see it. Then the mentor observes them doing it. I think this has really helped them as well. And when you have the monthly seminar meetings, oh, they love those. It is not a situation where they feel intimidated, not at all. They feel empowered; they feel that they have a partner.

MS. HARRISON: Not everybody has the same successes that happened here.

A part of it, a big part of it, is the mentors. Being a mentor requires two different skills. It's somebody who is extremely knowledgeable in the content area, but it's also somebody who is knowledgeable about working with an adult. There's a way you can come in and make a teacher feel like she wants to change, and there's a way you can come in and set a teacher's back up against you. And the Rice mentors have just done a beautiful job in the classroom. I also need to give Tri-County credit. You created an atmosphere; you gave clear expectations of what your agency wanted and what was expected of teachers. You have provided the means for them to start making these changes you're asking, through working with C.I.R.C.L.E. and sending them through our training, through working with Rice and giving them that ongoing support. You are providing that support so they can overcome whatever challenges they feel they're facing.

MS. MATHES: I think there is an atmosphere where your teachers see themselves as learners. The C.I.R.C.L.E. structure and the materials have been very valuable to the teachers. They provided many of the ideas that the teachers then could use and bring into their own work. It has been a wonderful synergy of lots of voices and conditions coming together, I think, to make things so successful.

Nestled in a back hallway at E. A. Jones Elementary School in Fort Bend ISD is the Head Start classroom taught by Marsha Johnson and Connie Ramos. Every school day 20 children (mostly four-years-old, but with a few three and five year-olds) gather to learn, sing, play and share together. This is also a classroom where children tell stories to their teacher, and act out these stories, every day. Ms. Johnson and Ms. Ramos have created a literacy-rich classroom: a sign-in sheet is on the door, children's names are functionally displayed around the room, a name graph documents which child likes which kind of cookie, a chart lists what the children already know about types of foods, and the pretend center is a restaurant with menus, ordering pads, and money. Throughout the room children are writing – writing individual letters and pseudo-letters, copying words, writing extended scribbles as a note to a friend. And they tell their stories to their teachers.



A Head Start student at E.A. Jones Elementary School in Fort Bend ISD and her writing.

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MS. BELLAMY: We have had strong partnerships throughout this, with C.I.R.C.L.E., with Rice and with Head Start, and particularly with the school district. The Head Start teachers are paired with pre-kindergarten teachers and that has given our Head Start teachers greater credibility. In most schools there may be just one or two pre-K teachers, and there's one Head Start teacher. But when we pair them together, they are now a team, and they act as a team in that school.

MS. HARRISON: I also think another really important part of this project in here is Rice, the Storytelling Project. I got to see one of the children doing her story dictation, and the little girl went on and on; the language was incredible. The teacher took the time to show me one of the child's first stories that was just a

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School Literacy & Culture Project Participates in Dual Language and ESL Program at Herod Elementary

by Judy Rolke, School Literacy & Culture Project Literacy Codirector

We're allies, Herod Elementary in HISD and the School Literacy and Culture Project. We both want to see children grow to their potential. A United States Department of Education grant has funded our collaboration on four projects to support the growth of Herod's dual language program and English as a Second Language students.

In the past two years Herod and the School Literacy and Culture Project have planned family literacy nights, enriched writing instruction through the School Writing Project seminars, mentored teachers in the Storytelling Project, and piloted the Tell Me Project.

Family literacy night helps forge home/school connections. Collaborative planning ensured that these programs could function smoothly and have wide appeal to attract many families. Presentations on poetry, book making, recipe testing, and computer story writing were among the activities that students and their parents enjoyed.

School Writing Project facilitators worked with teachers of older children at Herod. Through writing activities completed by the teachers and through discussion, classroom practices were studied with the aim to enliven and enrich students' writing. Since the teachers wrote during the seminars, they could empathize with and more fully understand the students' development as writers.

During the Storytelling Project collaboration teachers learned to use dictation and dramatization of children's stories, among other literacy activities, as part of their curriculum. As the children tell and act out their stories, their understanding of language greatly increases. In the fall of last year for example, a

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A student in a bilingual pre-K classroom at Herod Elementary School shows Judy Rolke, School Literacy & Culture Project Literacy Codirector, the story she is writing.

A Cultural Collaboration: Cultural Conversations and Teach For America

by Connie Floyd, Cultural Conversations Director

This year, second-year Houston Teach For America (TFA) teachers or corp-members were offered an opportunity to participate in a Cultural Conversations seminar group designed specifically for them as a part of their on-going professional development. To our delight more than 20 teachers attended a series of six seminars in the fall and this spring.

TFA teachers are working in some of the Houston areas most diverse schools.

They are teaching students whose backgrounds and cultures may be very different from their own. These young teachers are enthusiastic about teaching but even more excited about learning to be effective teachers.

In our seminars, teachers reflected about their own practice as we read *The Dreamkeepers* by Gloria Ladson-Billings and studied

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A Teach for America teacher and Cathy Morris, one of two Cultural Conversations facilitators, participate in a discussion at one of six Cultural Conversations seminars held this past fall and spring for Teach for America teachers.

"I am concerned about the glamorization of gang, thug life at my school. I see the toll it is taking on my students. And on the school itself."

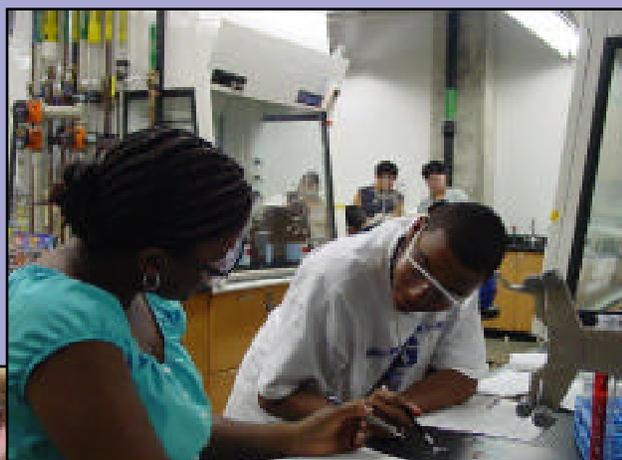
pH Lab: Nanotechnology

"Our kids come from all over the world -- Afghanistan, Vietnam, Mexico, Bosnia, the Sudan -- from 47 countries. This is their chance for an education. Having Nonie Harcombe and the pH Lab here is making all the difference. If 9th grade science isn't taught well, our kids aren't able to go on to succeed in the upper grades. They won't graduate. At Lee we are determined not to lose kids. The pH Lab helps us meet that commitment and at the same time trains teachers to go back into other schools with needs like ours. A great program!"

Steve Amstutz, Principal, Lee High School

"My kids are able to be successful in this class! It is obvious that quality teaching and learning are going on. The potential impact of this program for students across the district is meaningful and exciting."

Mary Stevens, Assistant Principal,
Lee High School



High school students confer during the CBEN summer academy.



Retired engineer and college student advise pH Lab students on their science project.

"My favorite aspects of the year have been the books that I have actually had time to read, my participation in productive discussions on education, and my interactions with all the experts who have visited."

Talira Grimes, pH Lab resident teacher,
Westbury High School

"My experience with the Rice pH Lab provided motivation to make a very important paradigm shift on how I approach science education . . . how to implement activities that encourage students to think and bring out their ideas . . . how to develop lessons that generate relevance and transfer information designed to promote student engagement."

Paul Guevarra, pH Lab resident teacher,
Sharpstown High School



Congratulations to pH Lab students for their awards at the HISD district science fair.



Science Comes to 9th Grade

In the city where the discovery of nanotechnology brought Nobel Prizes to two local scientists, one in six African American high school students leaves school before ever reaching 10th grade. For Latinos, the number is slightly larger and by senior year, half the original students in the class will be missing from many of our high schools. What barriers could be causing so many students to dropout by age 15? The answers are many, from poverty and family economic needs, to second language difficulties, to finding school irrelevant. One barrier missing from the statistics, but all too real for urban kids is 9th grade science, Integrated Physics and Chemistry (IPC). Few top chemistry or physics teachers want to teach it; few biology teachers know its content well; few schools have labs equipped for this course; and the IPC curriculum involves solving for one unknown – a component of algebra, which most 9th graders are just beginning to study.

All this exists in the city known around the world for the production of science knowledge – from computers to space, from medicine to nanotechnology. Clearly, something is wrong.

Dr. Elnora Harcombe is convinced the 9th grade science course can become a launch pad, not a barrier. She believes the key is the teacher. For 13 years, as director of the Center's Model Science Lab at Lanier Middle School, Dr. Harcombe has seen teachers transformed through an intensive residency year, learning new science and technology, and the practice of constructivist teaching for student understanding. The result of teachers' learning is urban kids who love science and see science in their futures.

The success of the Lanier Model Lab caught the attention of Steve Amstutz, Principal of Lee High School in HISD, where students represent more than 40 countries, many of them coming from war zones and economic chaos. School is vital to their future, and science is vital to their success in school.

Steve Amstutz's determination to create real learning opportunities for Lee students coincided with Nonie Harcombe's desire to tackle the quality of teaching in 9th grade science. The result: the establishment of the pH Lab at Lee, a one-year residency program for secondary science teachers from across the district to teach Lee students while learning new science, new hands-on strategies for teaching and learning, and new connections to the science Houston is famous for.

That's where nanotechnology comes in: The pH Lab is a partnership between the Rice Center for Education, HISD, and the Center for Biological and Environmental Nanotechnology at Rice (CBEN). Made possible by federal grants to CBEN and generous funding from the Cain Foundation to the Center for Education, this partnership is breaking

down the barriers between school science and Houston's cutting edge scientific discoveries. Dr. Harcombe instructs the teachers by modeling on a day-to-day basis, in the classroom with the students, the ways scientists confront questions and explore the natural world. CBEN offers Lee and other HISD students a summer academy on the Rice campus for learning "serious chemistry." It also provides teachers direct connections to scientists who are applying startling new discoveries to medical and environmental applications that have the power to change everyday life.

The pH Lab brings the world of science to students whose families have brought the world to Houston; whether from Afghanistan or Sudan, Bosnia or Mexico, these students are learning that there are no real barriers to learning when their teachers are learning, too.



We appreciate the whole-hearted support of Steve Amstutz, Principal of Lee High School, here with Dr. Harcombe.



Thanks go to Jim Weaver of the Cain Foundation for funding the pH Lab, here with Dr. Harcombe.



Elementary and Middle School Students Shine at the School Writing Project Student and Teacher Readings

More than 60 students read their poems and stories at the School Writing Project annual elementary and middle school student and teacher readings April 22, 2004 at Rice University. Fellow students, parents, grandparents and teachers packed the filled-to-capacity room to hear the writings of students, kindergarten through eighth grade, whose teachers participate in the Center for Education's School Writing Project. The following is a poem read by one of the student writers.



A group of students from Herod Elementary School wait to read their stories and poems at the School Writing Project Elementary and Middle School Student and Teacher Readings, April 22, 2004 at Rice University.

The Ocean

by Isabel la Cren, T.H. Rogers Middle School

The Ocean, beautiful, gleaming, splendid
To behold, lustrous habitat of reefs;
Yet in the midnight depths of it all, the peril
Stands, waiting to reveal itself like a thief.

Carefully trained eyes scan the horizon, the storm
looks to strike its prey, as the merchant's smooth
lying words flow out of his mouth,
Only upon money do his greedy eyes play.

Upon sandy shores, children play,
The ocean a pleasant playground,
Yet miles away, the stormstirs,
The pleasant facade drowned.

The sun has set, the storm arises,
Thunder rages from the clouds,
Rain pounds upon the ship,
Overcome, the mast finally bows.

Shipwrecks litter the ocean bed,
Like garbage in a child's room,
It swallows the last remnant of the ship,
Forever the ocean, a ship's tomb.

Lydia Smith Named Teacher of the Year at Challenge Early College High School

Lydia Smith, a language arts teacher and School Writing Project lead teacher, was named *Teacher of the Year* by Challenge Early College High School in Houston ISD (HISD). A seven-year veteran of HISD and the School Writing Project and graduate of the Rice teacher education program, Ms. Smith teaches Creative Writing and English 2. She is the Advisory Coordinator at the Challenge High School. Chosen by her fellow teachers at the Challenge High School, which is in its first year, she is their first *Teacher of the Year*.





continued from page 2, *Diversity Within Unity: Essential Principles for Teaching and Learning*

Principle 4: Schools should provide all students with opportunities to participate in extra- and co-curricular activities that develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that increase academic achievement and foster positive interracial relationships.

Intergroup Relations

Principle 5: Schools should create or make salient superordinate crosscutting group memberships in order to improve intergroup relations.

Principle 6: Students should learn about stereotyping and other related bias that have negative effects on racial and ethnic relations.

Principle 7: Students should learn about the values shared by virtually all cultural groups (e.g., justice, equality, freedom, peace, compassion, and charity).

Principle 8: Teachers should help students acquire the social skills needed to interact effectively with students from other racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups.

Principle 9: Schools should provide opportunities for students from different racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups

to interact socially under conditions designed to reduce fear and anxiety.

School Governance, Organization, and Equity

Principle 10: A school's organizational strategies should ensure that decision-making is widely shared and that members of the school community learn collaborative skills and dispositions in order to create a caring environment for students.

Principle 11: Leaders should develop strategies that ensure that all public schools, regardless of their locations, are funded equitably.

Assessment

Principle 12: Teachers should use multiple culturally sensitive techniques to assess complex cognitive and social skills.

Any faculty that works through these principles will have classrooms that are not only truly multicultural, but are powerfully educational.

The panel was sponsored by the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington and the Common Destiny Alliance at the University of Maryland. Diversity Within Unity can be downloaded from the Center for Multicultural Education website at <http://depts.washington.edu/centeme/centpub.htm>

continued from page 6, *Headstart at E.A. Jones*

Ms. Johnson reflected on how the children have grown since August. "In the fall the children told real short, short sentences, a couple of words. 'I go store.' Often not even complete sentences. Now what I'm seeing are complete sentences, using the proper grammar. I'm also noticing that the stories are longer, much longer than they were in the fall. The children are very observant now. When I first started with stories, they were talking to me, but they were fidgeting, looking around. They were telling me the story, but they were sort of talking to the air. Now when they're telling me the story, if they're not able to see what I'm writing, they are moving their heads around so they can see the words being produced. They really are observing the motion of my writing. They know I'm writing what they said.

"I have three readers, for sure, and five or six more who are on the edge of reading. They

have the letter recognition down and are putting sounds together. Sina can read her own stories and many of the books in the classroom. I see lots of shared reading.

"My children are also beginning to write what they are saying. For example, we read a story today, *Bella Lost Her Moo*. I asked the children to draw pictures of the characters in the story and then to come up with sentences of their own about what they saw in the book. They just sounded out the words. It was awesome. It blew me away! They impress me with something every day." [See photo, page 6]

This Head Start classroom shows us all that focused, committed teachers who have access to best practices and support in the classroom, can have enormous influence on the academic success of the young children in their care.



continued from page 4, *Uncovering the Stories Behind the Dropout Rates*

To regain momentum in the project, the Rice students and I developed interview protocols based on Spradley's (1979) Grand Tour questions, asking school leavers and potential school leavers to discuss their academic lives and the roles their family and friends played in their lives. As the students began to interview each other in small groups, it was difficult to separate the interviewees from the interviewees. Students would discuss teachers they shared and memorable experiences they had in school.

One interview among Latino students turned into a group discussion of a school journey that was stalled in ninth grade before regaining momentum in sophomore year. The students noisily described their fruitful elementary school years, filled with academic awards and honors. Middle school brought fewer accolades but more school social activities. Ninth grade was a year of social excitement with new friends from other schools, less supervision than middle school, an easy opportunity to skip classes with friends and, for some, a year of academic failure. Parents, friends and inner resolve encouraged many of these students to continue their schooling.

However, home life and school life appeared in sharp relief in some stories as students struggle with unusual responsibilities that send them into adult life at home and a suspended life of adolescent freedom at school. A seemingly carefree African American student laughs off her failing status in school. Her jovial, boisterous nature marks her as a class clown who takes nothing seriously. However, her tone becomes more serious as she talks about her new responsibilities. This failing student has moved out of her family home into her great-grandmother's home to prepare meals, wash clothes, clean house, and help her ailing great grandmother with morning and evening dressing.

In another group, a school leaver who has returned describes his life on the streets. This former druggie explains that he was making a few hundred dollars a day standing in line for his dad's prospective clients waiting to get

bail bond money. When he comes to school, he questions the relevance of what he is learning in comparison with the lives of his family members and the work he did on the streets.

Another school leaver is a recent Mexican immigrant who has already graduated from high school in Mexico. She became frustrated

continued on following page



Ruth Zamudio and Lisa Crouch with their students who presented Spanish songs and rhymes.

School Literacy & Culture Project Hosts 5th Annual Miniconference

Over 250 early childhood educators gathered in Rice University's Duncan Hall on January 17, 2004 to learn more about children's literature and literacy at the fifth annual early literacy miniconference sponsored by the School Literacy and Culture (SLC) Project. Anchored by Patsy Cooper's keynote address, "Eight Books That Will Change a Young Child's Life," the conference offered teachers from public and private school and Head Start classrooms the opportunity to explore new practices and to imagine new ways to connect children to literature. Breakout sessions focused on comprehension, read alouds, poetry, writing with young children, bilingual language learners, fantasy play, connecting books and values, and much more. These sessions were presented by mentor teachers from SLC's Classroom Storytelling Project. Children from the Benevides Elementary prekindergarten bilingual classroom of Lisa Crouch, SLC mentor teacher, and Ruth Zamudio, came on this Saturday to show participants the songs and poems they had learned. This remarkable demonstration allowed teachers to see how rhymes and songs not only delight children, but enhance their literacy learning. Comments from participants were overwhelmingly positive: "I am leaving with many thoughts to ponder, planning how to change my teaching to keep it fresh and relevant." "Sessions were uniformly well-organized, full of usable and interestingly presented information with children foremost, always." "Patsy Cooper always stimulates my thinking, keeps me on my toes." Teachers loudly applauded Cooper's powerful statement that "books are not for teaching children how to read. Books are for teaching children how to *live*."

To receive information on next year's conference or SLC's Summer Institute on Reading, Writing and Cultural Connections July 12 - 16, please send your mailing address to slc@rice.edu.



continued from previous page, *Uncovering the Stories Behind the Dropout Rates*

with the number of hours she would have to take to graduate in this country. However, she returned to school with the realization that the current requirements are a necessary obstacle on her road to college education and a career.

We have also misjudged students from their appearance or their status in the class. The Latina student who has designed a PowerPoint presentation for her small group spent much of the early days of the project applying makeup and reading beauty magazines. An African American male who is classified as a special education student with marginal reading ability made a summary presentation of a research article from a peer-reviewed journal and has organized the PowerPoint presentation for his small group.

Another student separated herself from the class, firmly ensconced in front of a blank computer screen, head down between folded arms, oblivious to the discussion of research articles and interviews. However, her first writing on the dropout issue showed the strongest writing voice in the two junior

English classes. This Latina had left the magnet program at Furr after her sister died last year. She had isolated herself from her classmates. Facing mandated school failure because of poor attendance, she has been coaxed into a group where she has contributed literature reviews and interview notes.

As this research program moves into its final phase with a small group of student researchers from Furr, their English teacher, Angela Borzon, two of the student researchers, Esther and Habib, and this researcher, we have intense daily meetings at the end of the school day. Students are writing a response to the PEER Committee Report for Improving High School Graduation Rates that was commissioned by HISD. Our goal is for these students to use the information they gain from their research and their lives to influence the policymakers in the district as HISD works to develop a program to curb high school dropouts.

continued from page 5, *Judy Radigan, Advocate for Children*

a heartwarming story. It's also an instructive tale of the small things that motivate a student's success to overcome entrenched labels. By documenting his story Judy Radigan gives us a lens with which to view large-scale school reform, and to see what is happening to the Irineos in our educational system.

Dr. Radigan's current research involves observations at Furr High School, on the east side of HISD, a school that is doing its best to overcome a history of under-funding and low expectations. Furr was one of the first schools to experiment with the small-schools model of reform. For ten years, teachers and principals have worked to make the school a place where students like Irineo could find the encouragement they need to be successful. Within its walls, one can find many examples of the problems and possibilities faced by students with limited resources.

Her study of Furr reform takes her into classrooms. It is obvious to anyone who sees her there that Judy Radigan enjoys her interactions with students. During the current semester, she has observed and assisted a teacher and two junior-level English classes in

a non-traditional study of dropouts. As high school students themselves, they have been able to examine the factors that cause high school students to drop out or to stay in school. While the students in small groups are conducting the interviews of current and former students, Judy Radigan listens and watches intently, and her comments are to the point. Her additional questions help the students see the patterns in life choices and the impact on their lives.

One student tells of her experience having a baby 18 months ago; she kept up with her studies, maintains an A/B average in her courses, and plans to study science in college. Another seems caught in a downward spiral of drinking and drug use. Another must cope after being kicked out of his home by a step-parent. As another is interviewed, the student and the rest of us come to understand that her success in various grades and classes often mirrors how much she respects, and feels respected by, her teachers.

Judy Radigan is also involving Rice education students in the dropout project as they help the high school students compose their

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continued from page 13, Judy Radigan, Advocate for Children

interview questions. As they participate, Judy uses this experience to demonstrate a caring and careful approach to research. It is obvious how much she respects the students, both from the high school and from the university.

As Judy Radigan reflects on what keeps her motivated, she talks about becoming more and more aware of "the chasm that exists between poor and middle-class in this city." She has seen middle-class administrators, teachers, and volunteers try to impose their own values and expect that this alone will cause students to "see the light and automatically rise up out of poverty." From her research and her experiences she sees a more complex set of problems, and by giving voice to the students and communities with which she works, hopes to make our educational system more equitable for all students.

Research at the Center for Education is focused on issues of academic quality and educational equity, from policy to classrooms and children. The capacity of the Center to take on these big issues while always keeping our focus on children is made much more attainable by having Judy Radigan as a member of our research team.

continued from page 7, Cultural Collaborations: Cultural Conversations and Teach for America

culturally relevant pedagogy. They questioned the effectiveness of their curriculum as we read *What Keeps Teachers Going* by Sonia Nieto. Within this safe and supportive group setting, TFA corp-members examined their own biases and the impact these may have on their teaching practice, questions raised in the reading of *Subtractive Schooling* by Angela Valenzuela.

With two teachers facilitating the seminars, the group offered not only solutions but avenues, based on research and experience, to explore. We had professional, purposeful discussions about race, gender, culture, class, ethnicity, teaching and learning. From our vantage point it has been a wonderful collaboration.

As James Banks, University of Washington Professor and Multicultural Education expert, writes, student diversity in school is both a challenge and an opportunity. These TFA teachers are seizing the opportunity to learn about the complex characteristics of ethnic and racial groups within their schools and the ways in which race, ethnicity, language, and social class interact to influence student behavior. (Principle 1, Diversity within Unity, James Banks, et al.)

The challenge for these teachers is one shared by most people entering the teaching profession today: their own limited diversity experiences. They for the most part have lived lives within homogeneous communities and have had few opportunities to interact with people from other racial, ethnic, language, social class groups or nationalities. Even the corp-members of color, who may share the same race and ethnic background with their students, have, through their own academic efforts and successes, placed themselves some distance from their students and their families.

One TFA teacher shared, "I find myself trying to promote college and tie academic performance and current decisions to later success but worry about being condescending and critical of my students' parents' educational choices."

Another teacher expressed, "I am concerned about the glamorization of gang, thug life at my school. I see the toll it is taking on my students. And on the school itself."

Yet another shared concerns about the lack of parent support he has seen this year as compared to last year at another school and grade level.

These Teach for America corp-members asked good questions about their practice, they wondered about the impact the school culture has on teaching and learning, and they considered the role parents play in the lives of their students. These are all part of what it takes to be an effective teacher of diverse students. As one member concluded, "I've learned that it is not enough to know my subject. I have to know my students." We agree.



continued from page 7, School Literacy & Culture Project Participates in Dual Language and ESL Programs

kindergartengirl I'll call Jane wanted to act out a Cinderella story for her class. She very quickly dictated a few brief sentences of things she remembered. When the dramatization took place, there were no step-sisters in the story. Jane was initially quite disappointed. Things hadn't happened as she pictured them. Parts of the story were missing. The teacher reread what she had dictated, then helped her retrieve additional pertinent information and order it correctly. When it was dramatized again, it was not only satisfying to the girl, but it was more readily understood by the audience. What a lot of growth toward her potential as an author, Jane made that day.

Last year our alliance learned about a London, England group, Make Believe Arts, that supports older children taking the dictation and leading the dramatization of younger story tellers. Herod and the School

Literacy and Culture Project decided to pilot such a program, the Tell Me Project. Both teachers of younger and older children see many benefits. Elizabeth McStay, a pre-K teacher, says "Storytelling reinforces so many skills; the more times a student can tell his or her story, the better." Heather Tate, a fifth grade teacher says, "I hope they (her English as a second language students) will gain confidence in English and a wider vocabulary." The older students beginning the program feel they have already gone through the age of the younger students and think it's "cool" to help the little ones. At the end of the year we will celebrate the growth toward potential that both the youngest and the oldest students have been making.

New teaching and new teacher understanding have opened new directions for the children to grow toward their potential.

continued from page 6, Classroom Storytelling Project Brings 'Outstanding' Benefits to Head Start in Fort Bend ISD

few word utterances, not sentences, no story structure – what you might see typically. And then to see this child – and this wasn't the end of the year, this was February – to see this child do a full-page story, and then dramatize it. Pick who was going to act in it. We talked about empowering these teachers, but what does that do for a child?

MS. MATHES: I think when we in professional development take time to listen to our teachers, it is important. But when a teacher takes the time to listen to an individual child, not just for a second or five seconds but for five minutes – it does give children a very powerful message about their place in the classroom.

MS. WRIGHT: And they take that message home. I have had parents tell me, "You know what my child did? They got us all around in the living room, and they were telling a story. They were reading their story, then asked us to tell a story as well as the other children." And that has a lot to do with the literacy for adults too. Another thing with the teachers in the classrooms, they are taking their show on the road. They feel so confident within themselves that they give workshops now and invite ISD pre-K teachers.

MS. BELLAMY: Our early Head Start teachers, even though they have not been part of the project, have learned so much from their cohorts

in Head Start. I was in an early Head Start class on Friday. The kids – and this was a 24-month class – had their large letters on a cookie sheet and they played a game. The teacher had the first letter of every child's name and she dumped them on the floor. Every child took their letter: "This is my 'A' for Artoire." "This is my 'J' for Jivarte." They knew their letters!

MS. HARRISON: And without any flashcard drills –

MS. WRIGHT: I was in a classroom the day that the students came back from Christmas holidays. I was there at 7:15 that morning, and when the children came in they knew exactly what they were going to do. They went and got materials. They went and got books. They just took care of everything. One little girl got her book, and she just started reading. Then one boy came in and he said, "Yes, I'm back at school, yeah!" He was excited to learn, to be back in Head Start. And I thought this was just wonderful, the day after Christmas holiday. He had been gone for two weeks and couldn't wait to be back.

MS. MATHES: That *is* wonderful. You have created classrooms where kids are motivated to learn and are happy. They've got exciting, interesting things to do, and they've got teachers who care about them and listen to their stories.



• Upcoming Events •

- June 6- June 25, 2004 Summer Creative Writing Program for Young People
School Literacy & Culture Project and Writers in the Schools
Annunciation Orthodox School
- July 12 - July 16, 2004 Reading, Writing and Cultural Connections Summer Institute
School Literacy & Culture Project
Rice University
- September 29, 2004 Hazel Creekmore Memorial Symposium: Teaching for Multicultural Literacy, Global Citizenship, and Social Justice by Dr. James Banks, Russell F. Stark
University Professor in Curriculum and Instruction, and Director, Center for Multicultural Education, University of Washington, Seattle
Grand Hall, Rice University

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