Preparing Leaders for Latina/o Academic and Language Success: Frameworks, Perspectives and Strategies

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Abstract Despite the increased enrollment of students of color in Texas schools, many school leaders still need to become more knowledgeable and pedagogically prepared to better serve the needs of diverse students. This chapter highlights how current school practices are not sufficiently responsive to the cultural and linguistic assets of students from diverse backgrounds. In this chapter, the authors offer practical strategies and frameworks to facilitate a change process in schools and communities. By drawing on these strategies and frameworks, school leaders can engage in a grassroots approach to create more socially just schools and educational experiences for students of color.

1   Introduction

Public school enrollment in the U.S. consists increasingly of students of color, and students with varying linguistic backgrounds. In Texas schools, in every major urban center and across each region, Latina/o students are no longer a "minority" (Murdock, Cline, Zey, Jeanty, & Perez, 2014). Higher education institutions and school districts of all sizes are being challenged to implement academic programming that produces success with and for this type of diversity (López & Moreno, 2014). The decisions made by educational leaders and practices utilized by educators have direct impact on these communities, and what they ultimately implement will have long-term impact on the future of the state. We contend that educators and school leaders must do a better job at addressing their deficiencies in leadership

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practice especially concerning cultural and linguistic responsiveness. Many educators and leaders are not well equipped to serve Latina/o students or to engage Latina/o parents and families. Policymakers and educational leaders need to know that the fastest growing and youngest student group is Latina/o, and that this sustained growth will persist over the next several decades (Murdock et al., 2014). Capable and culturally competent educators and administrative personnel must be prepared in response to these demographic changes (Valenzuela, 2016). Despite the irrefutable fact that Texas schools are among the most diverse and that students bring multilingual abilities, educational polices fail to address pervasive segregation (Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012), funding continues to be distributed in unequal and inequitable ways (Alemán, 2007; Maxcy, Rorrer, & Alemán, 2009), and academic standards are enforced as doctrines without much considersation of students' cultural and linguistic assets (Valenzuela, 2004). In this chapter we argue that school leaders need to face these challenges head on, recognize the inherent complexities of engaging in such efforts, and embrace the cultural assets of their communities – including the racial and linguistic diversity – if they are to create spaces for all children to succeed. We outline practices and strategic activities that center Latina/o student experiences, engage communities by providing a model of inclusion for emergent bilingual students, and call on educational policymakers to utilize their role and institutional power to enhance awareness of cultural diversity in schools, rather than to enact deficit-oriented practices and policies that have resulted in unequal educational opportunities for the majority of Texas students.

2   The Browning of U.S. and Texas Schools

Public schools are typically among the first institutions to experience shifts in demographics, and remain among the most vital organizations in providing access to upward social mobility for young people and their families. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), from 1990 to 2010, the number of Latina/o students rose from 5.1 million to 12.1 million, an increase of 11% of the student population. The trend is not subsiding as the Latina/o population is projected to double from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million in 2060, resulting in one in three U.S. residents identifying as Latina/o compared to the current one in six (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Considering these demographic shifts, the U.S. population growth from 2000 to 2010 accounted for a 43% rise within the Latina/o population. This accounts for an increase of 15.2 million individuals. Most of this growth in the United States occurred in the South (57%) and in the Midwest (49%). The five so-called majority-minority states or territories in 2011 were Hawaii 77.1%, the District of Columbia 64.7%, California 60.3%, New Mexico 59.8% and Texas 55.2% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). However, California, Texas, and Florida reported having over half of the Latina/o residents.

Furthermore, the change in school population is not only seen in the Latina/o population. According to NCES, student enrollment of White and Black students

has been decreasing in U.S. public schools. Between 2001 and 2011, the enrollment of White students decreased by 8% and Black students decreased by 1% (NCES, 2014). During the same time period, the Latina/o student population increased by 7%, while the Asian student population increased by 1% (NCES, 2014). With these population shifts in mind, it is now necessary to critically consider how educators are prepared to welcome and properly serve the new student population. Educating the diverse student population is still a very White educator profession, where 82% of teachers were White and 80% of principals were White during 2010–2011 academic year (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Therefore, as the population continues to shift across the country, educators must consider how their racial identities reflect their students. Moreover, educator and leader preparation pipelines need to change to embrace the diversification of schools across the nation.

In Texas, the demographic shifts have been more pronounced. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Latina/o students accounted for the largest percentage of total enrollment (51.8%) in 2013–14, followed by White (29.5%), African American (12.7%), Asian (3.7%), and multiracial (1.9%) students. Furthermore, across racial/ethnic groups in 2013–14, the percentages of individual group enrollment by students identified as economically disadvantaged were larger for Latina/o (77.7%) and Black (73.1%) students than for multiracial (43.9%), Asian (30.4%), and White (28.3%) students. Higher Latina/o enrollment was also evident in instructional programs for special populations. For example, Latina/o enrollment for English Language Learner enrollment was at 90.6%; 98.4% for migrant education; 62.7% for Title I; and 49.4% for special education. However, in the same year, 3.3% of Black and 2.8% of Latina/o students dropped out of high school, in comparison to 1.1% of Whites, 0.8% of Asians, and 2.2% of Pacific Islanders. A closer look at drop out rates reveals how schools are failing Latina/x students. In Texas, Latina/o student dropout rates in ESL were 4.1%. For students identified as "migrant" or receiving special education their drop out rates were 3.9% and 3.2% respectively, much higher than the state average of 2.2% (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

Due to higher enrollment of Latina/o students in schools, educational policymakers and leaders need to examine data trends to determine where schools can better assist students to successfully navigate the public school experience and provide support to achieve academic success. It is important for schools and school leaders to become understanding of the programmatic needs of the diverse student population they serve to ensure students have the proper instructional support to successfully navigate the educational process. This new perspective calls for educators to be more culturally aware of the new Texas demographics so that schools can recognize and celebrate the differences of students, families, and staff.

3　From Deculturalizing Spaces to Asset-Based Schools

The shifting nature of public school enrollment requires a renewed focus on leadership development and a re-tooling of leadership and educator practice. When put into proper context, the histories of public education, migration, and racial diversity

adds additional significance to the preparation of school leaders. As many scholars have documented, public schools have historically disadvantaged and discriminated against students of color (Anderson, 2007), and against Latina/os in particular (Acuña, 1988; Donato, 1997; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Egregiously, Native American students experienced boarding schools after being forcefully removed from their families and communities (Lomawaima, 1999). Japanese American students were held captive and marked as foreign threats in internment camps across the West and Southwest after the attack on Pearl Harbor (Takaki, 2000). And the long history of Black segregation and violence, from slavery to Reconstruction to Jim Crow, is well documented (Anderson, 2007; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). The historical remnants of these periods of U.S. racial injustice are institutionalized and thriving today (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Gillborn, 2009; Love, 2004; Tatum, 1992; Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009).

For Latina/o students, schools have also been sites of disadvantage and deculturalization. Defined by Spring (2016) as the conscious attempt to replace one culture and language with another that is considered to be "superior" (p. 1), scholars (DePouw, 2012; Lomawaima, 1999) have demonstrated that the framing of any language other than English as an indicator of academic inferiority has been one form of deculturalization. Tracking students and categorizing them as academically deficient, has further disadvantaged students who attend school with a home or primary language of Spanish. Valencia (2008), in his book on litigation pursued by Mexican American educators, activists and parents, dedicates a whole chapter to the numerous court cases specifically about language, bilingual education policy, and the treatment of Latina/ox students. Unfortunately, many of the same deficit notions and practices – especially around language and bilingualism – continue to persist across K-12 institutions (García & Guerra, 2004).

With her conceptualization of community cultural wealth, Yosso (2005) lays out forms of capital that many communities of color posses but that do not always get "counted" or acknowledged as assets. Social, familial, resistant, navigational and linguistic forms of capital enable students and families with little or no material wealth to not only survive but to also thrive in conditions that most would consider unbearable. Linguistic capital, in particular, is relevant to communities where most students and family members might not necessarily speak English or have strong command of it, but who nonetheless possess the ability to communicate in Spanish. Many children, who because they may act as translators or brokers for their parent, thus possess linguistic and navigational capital because they are able to communicate on behalf of their family member and learn from an early age in life how to navigate complex governmental agencies or institutional policies. Despite having these forms of capital, many mainstream or traditional notions of "wealth" or "capital" might not view the community cultural wealth of these children or families. Similar to the way that Valencia and Black note in their work, educators might "blame the victim" for their academic failure, rather than note the tremendous assets that Latina/o families possess, or fail to acknowledge the "funds of knowledge" that are passed onto their children.

4   Preparing Teacher-Leaders and School Leaders for Social Justice

Teacher preparation has traditionally been focused on pedagogical skills and content training. Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, and Crawford (2005) found that teachers complete their preparation programs and perpetuate one of three common practices in the classroom:

> [a] curriculum centered on the dominant culture, which ignores bias and fails to address inequity, a curriculum that pretends that differences do not exist, thereby denying the experiences of many children in the classroom, a curriculum that treats multicultural as tourism, in which superficial aspect of the culture (holidays/food, etc.) are introduced. (p. 50)

As such, educators continue to reflect the practices and ideologies that were passed to them in their preparation programs and often do not embrace the differences that students come with as forms of assets. Delpit (2006) maintained that teacher preparation "usually focuses on research that links failure and social economic status, failure and cultural differences, and failure and single-parent households" (p. 34). Therefore, teacher preparation needs to address the tendency educators have of blaming students with differences, particularly, immigrants, for failure in public schools because they are the innocent/victims (Valencia, 1997). Similarly, language diversity and home languages other than English have historically been deemed as markers of inferiority (Spring, 2016). Educators must shift the thinking and practice of education for students, particularly students who speak another language other than English. What is missing in the training of teacher programs is the development of educators as cultural responsive educators, who learn and lead for social justice. Using various pedagogical practices, educators can become more familiar with the various needs of the changing demographics. These approaches can facilitate a process to assist educators view themselves as leaders able to create equitable opportunity for all students.

4.1   Innovative Educator Preparation in Texas

Over the years, many scholars have focused on developing awareness about the oppressive systems found in schools and communities (Bordas, 2012; Freire, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Murakami-Ramalho, Garza, & Merchant, 2009; Theoharis, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). Such scholars highlight the need to be more socially just in school systems if educators are committed to increase academic performance for all students. Valenzuela (1999) found that teachers who embraced an authentic care towards Latina/o students have a much better opportunity of engaging students in schools. Nieto (2007) worked with teachers who embodied particular behaviors characteristic of what she conceptualized as teacher leadership. According to Nieto, teacher leaders are those who practice believing in, and advocating for, public education, challenging conventional

wisdom, improvise to meet students' diverse needs, model social justice, and use power inside and outside the classroom.

In order to move the work from the conventional practices of teacher leaders as department heads or master teachers, teacher leadership development needs to be embedded in professional environments. A single training will not facilitate the development of vital teacher leadership traits. While there are no particular skillsets required for teacher leaders, Nieto suggests that educators can foster certain conditions to enact teacher leadership. Within the scope of their practice, Nieto asserts certain concepts must be present to enact teacher leadership. Respect and support from administration and colleagues, the time and resources to practice leadership and the opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues are hallmarks of this practice. Teachers need to embrace a mentoring mindset where the mentor/mentee relationship is reciprocal. A reciprocal mentor/mentee relationship is critical when attempting to develop teacher leadership. This reciprocal approach allows teachers to collaborate and share experiences, ways of knowing, and knowledge relevant to supporting the needs of marginalized students. The relationship fostered between teachers is one of respect and care. These powerful relationships are then institutionalized within schools and passed through other interactions with other colleagues, administrators, students, and families.

Teachers who embody leadership traits understand the authentic role of educating a child holistically. Teacher leaders do not neglect the multidimensional needs of students. Given the demographic shifts across the nation, a teacher leader's knowledge and practice on how to address the culture, language, abilities and lived experiences of students is critical. This approach invites teachers to reject deficit notions of students with diverse backgrounds. The development of teacher leaders challenges the hegemonic practices that helps some students while neglecting to properly serve culturally and linguistically diverse students. Nieto (2007) argued that the practice of teacher leadership can provide a teacher who is interested in becoming a social change agent the opportunity to become a "moral compass for the nation" (p. 307).

4.2   Educators as Teacher Leaders

Teachers as leaders is not a novel concept. While their roles and responsibilities vary, what is the heart of their work is the desire to help students and colleagues succeed. Context is crucial for the work of teacher leaders. With the demographic shift our nation and schools are undergoing, it is important for teacher leaders to get to know the communities and schools they serve. With this approach, teacher leaders can advance a social justice perspective to support and advocate for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Furthermore, while not every practitioner may have gone through a teacher education program that focused on equity and social justice, teachers still have potential to be powerful agents of change.

Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008) contend that educators are in a position to use their agency as a catalyst for activism. "Teachers are in control of their work with an

agenda to not only work for children in their immediate care but also having a wider social justice imperative" (p. 336). Unfortunately, many of these teachers who advance this form of work may be viewed as uncompliant and radicals. As such, minimal research exists on the work these types of teacher leaders are doing as many times teacher leaders are conditioned to embrace traditional managerial tasks. According to Yendol-Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000), missing from the literature are the voices of educators who have enacted the third wave of teacher leadership. The first wave of teacher leadership consisted of those teachers who fulfilled formal management roles such as department head and team leader. As the teaching profession evolved so did the responsibilities. In the second wave of teacher leadership, such practice was characterized by teachers who provided pedagogical expertise as specialists out of the classroom. Many public schools have adopted this model as instructional specialists, instructional coaches or master teachers. However, these types of leadership practices are still centered on pedagogical and content knowledge and not focused on the multidimensional needs of students. As such, the third way of teacher leadership, as suggested by Yendol-Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan is characterized by teachers who lead from within the classroom and "navigate the structures of the school, nurture relationships, encourage professional growth, help others with change, and challenge the status quo by raising children's voices" (p. 12). These educators embrace the teaching aspect of the profession while simultaneously advancing the social and emotional needs of the students they serve. This form of teacher leadership is focused on adopting the tenets of social justice leadership from the classroom. Teachers with the adequate support and creative space can engage in multidimensional experiences that can help them lead and teach in an equitable manner.

4.3   Preparing Culturally Responsive School Leaders

In preparing to teach and lead for a more culturally and linguistically diverse Texas, educational leaders must be culturally aware of and competent to lead in schools with students of color. Educators, as instructional leaders, need to be familiar with cultural relevant pedagogies to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all. According to Ladson-Billings (1995a), educational leaders must consider the academic success that all students need to experience. Ladson-Billings (1995b) also highlights that, "Despite the current social inequities and hostile classroom environments, students must develop their academic skills….[as well as] literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills….to be active participants in democracy" (p. 160). To do so, she argues that schools must develop and maintain student's cultural competence, which can partly be achieved by utilizing a student's culture as a vehicle for learning. Finally, Ladson-Billings argues that schools should help students develop a critical consciousness to challenge the status quo and critique social norms, values, and morals.

One approach educators can model in schools to better serve culturally and linguistically diverse students is to create inclusive instructional classrooms. Using this model, students are afforded with additional instructional assistance which results in higher participation in class. Also, the learning experiences a student brings from his/her cultural background needs to be reflected in curriculum and classroom activities. This adds value to the student's new content knowledge and bridges connections from her or his prior knowledge. As a principal, one must ensure this form of environment allows students to become engaged in their learning.

5 Strategies for Engaging Schools in the Success of Latina/o Students and Families

5.1 Equity Audits

Equity audits can help familiarize educators with their school and community and help them identify challenges and inequities that exist within the school (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009). Equity audits provide the guidance and structure for educators to collect and critically analyze data on school profiles. Areas in which educators collect and analyze data include the following: General and Social Class Data; Status of Labeling at the School, General Achievement Data; Race and Ethnicity Data; English Language Learners (ELL) and Bilingual Education Data; (Dis)ability Data; and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (LGBT support and alliances).

Specifically, the equity audit experience calls for educators to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data is collected from state and district reports, surveys and other quantifiable information schools collect throughout the school year. For the qualitative data, educators are encouraged to interview fellow teachers, counselors and administrators to elicit information beyond the traditional information schools generate. In this exercise, educators analyze the data from their campus to generate common themes about their instructional programs, teacher quality, and programmatic practices. In sum, this collection of information creates a more transparent report of how and where school resources are prioritized. Furthermore, educators are encouraged to collaborate with others in the campus to make this a more organic learning opportunity for all educational professionals in the school. Additionally, educators can then identify at least two leadership recommendations they would make based on their findings that could improve campus equity and/or student achievement.

For servicing bilingual students, Frattura and Capper (2007) suggest for all teachers to become bilingual certified, since knowledge of language acquisition and pedagogical techniques associated with bilingual education can benefit all students. They also suggest for all faculty and staff to learn a second language in order to experience the first-hand challenges, frustrations, and nuances of learning a second

language. It also opens up learning about literacy that will benefit all students. In sum, conducting an equity audit will not only provide basic information about the students' needs, but more importantly, give educators the knowledge needed to value the knowledge capital students come to school with and be able to share cultural wealth with the community. It may also inspire teachers to expand their professional capacities to better serve their students.

5.2   Leaders for Community Engagement

Schools are essential institutions within communities. As educational institutions, one of their goals is to prepare individuals that will be able to contribute to the growth and progress of the social groups they belong. However, this is not a one-way endeavor. In fact, the development of meaningful relationships between a school and its community will impact positively the two entities, and thus the wellness of all members. In order to establish a foundation for such connections, it is imperative for schools to be proactive and to go out of their comfort zone. Teachers and school staff are to experience the community and its assets in a way that opens their minds to learning. Interacting with community members in daily life situations provides significant insights to teachers because they are no longer outsiders of the community, but rather they become insiders (Pollock, 2008). According to Sullivan (2001), a community has both an historical record and current resources that can enhance teaching and learning. Teachers can learn from collective memories and people's ways of living and can incorporate that cultural richness into their classroom instruction.

In addition to the equity audit, educators are also encouraged to engage in a more collaborative approach to building ties between the school and community. As such, a community scan provides an opportunity for educators to extend the learning beyond the walls of the schools and into the neighborhoods. In this experience, educators are encouraged to solicit information from families, students, business members, and community stakeholders. For example, brief surveys can be conducted with students and parents to gauge the sentiment of the community and to better understand what community members feel is either lacking or working in the district as well as the community. Additionally, soliciting this information from parents and students reminds them of their vital role in the educational process. Businesses are key stakeholders who are essential in the development of instructional programs and partnerships. As educators, inviting them to contribute to the growth and improvement of schools helps generate investments.

Traditionally, schools are active in conducting neighborhood walks at the beginning of the school year to introduce themselves to the community. However, this singular attempt to create community with the neighborhood has little impact to sustain a promising partnership between schools and the neighborhood. What is needed is a more organic and grassroots approach where educators visit with community members throughout the school year. This ongoing effort entices families, business and community stakeholders as active participants in the schooling pro-

cess. Having periodic meetings with the stakeholders is another attempt to increase family engagement with the school. Such meetings can highlight concerns with the students' attendance, social emotional issues, negative environmental factors, and poverty issues. Due to this approach, educators can be made aware of the resources the community offers.

Furthermore, educators can organize a community walk in the neighborhood of the school. This is a great opportunity for the teachers, staff and administration to know more about the culture, language, abilities and diverse knowledge available to the school from the community. This discovery process can then be used to engage a reciprocal relationship between the school and community. When educators understand the histories of the diverse populations they serve in schools, they are able to recognize community strategies that are used to cope with everyday challenges (Rodriguez & Fabionar, 2010). In order for a school to thrive they must reach out into their community.

5.3 Reflective Practitioner Practices

Lastly, a teacher leader must be willing to engage in critical reflection. This reflection provides an opportunity for an educator to look at their role in practice. How do teachers practice a balance of promoting change, conservation, coalition, and confrontation for students of diverse backgrounds? This mindset of reflection allows teacher leaders to negotiate the tension between curriculum standards and their agency as critical educators. Teacher leaders who are reflective can integrate their knowledge, the knowledge of their communities, and their own critical observations of self to modify their practices and curriculum to be more culturally responsive to their students. Through critical reflection teacher leaders also find their authentic purpose for teaching.

Journaling provides another opportunity for educators to reflect about their experiences and express their thoughts in a written format. In the journaling experience, educators are able to share how certain practices, behaviors and attitudes influence their pedagogy. During their reflective experience, educators are able to intimately challenge themselves. In the journal, educators are encouraged to share concerns, fears, celebrations, comments from readings, reactions to readings, and anything they feel compelled to share. The reflective journal is a simple process with the purpose of helping educators be reflexive about their practice.

5.4 Principals as Agents of Support

Researchers suggest the principal's position is critical for increasing levels of student performance, especially for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Lyons & Algozzine, 2006). Glover-Blackwell, Kwoh, and Pastor (2010) contend

that, "minority concerns are no longer strictly minority concerns" (p. 35). Therefore, school leaders must create a practice to gain a deeper understanding of inequalities that impact the lives of students of color and invest in their economic and social growth. This can be a challenge for principals given the demands of high-stakes accountability and resources challenges described in other chapters. However, if principals are working collaboratively with teacher leaders and communities, they will be able to better understand their school-community resources and use them in ways that support equitable and inclusive schools and classrooms.

Given the historical trends of Latina/o students, it is of urgency that school leadership development, training and preparation address how school leaders can foster a culture of academic success given the current and future population projections of Latinos. Scholars, such as Ylimaki, Brunderman, Bennett, and Dugan (2014), for example continue to find the need to prepare principals to lead in culturally diverse schools. In order to facilitate the development of this type of school leader, principal preparation programs have seen the need to integrate issues of diversity into coursework by proposing a variety of models and approaches to developing social justice leaders (Cambron-McCabe, 2010; McKenzie et al., 2008). This important practice must be adopted by leadership preparation programs that address issues of equity, justice and academic advancement.

6   Conclusion

The story of the United States and Texas is not complete without the contributions of immigrants from all over the world. Yet, current political and economic conditions have created a backlash against immigration, particularly immigration from Central and Latin America. As communities in Texas continue to become more diverse, preparation programs must be responsive to better prepare educators to serve Texas public school students. Given the historical context, it is imperative that educator preparation programs provide pre-service teachers and leaders with the tools to advocate for students who identify as immigrants and non-native English speakers so that all students are given an equal opportunity. Moreover, to prepare pre-service educators during their preparation programs with the mindsets and skills necessary to take action and to advocate for immigrant students, some university professors have created opportunities and strategies for students to engage the community and schools during their university experience.

While most leadership preparation programs are focused on narrowly adhering to state certification standards, the Urban School Leaders Collaborative offers a model for developing leaders for social justice (Merchant & Garza, 2015). This program is unique in its pedagogical approach for leadership development. The pedagogy is centered on developing all educators as leaders for a more equitable learning environment. Adopting this leadership development program, aspiring school leaders participate in leadership exercises to develop a mindset of equitable practices. In this space, aspiring school leaders are able to see the strengths of students

from diverse backgrounds. They are able to recognize a student's lived experience as part of the student's knowledge base and incorporate that knowledge in how they teach. School leaders and teachers must refuse to think of students as passive learners waiting for intellectual deposits from the omniscient teacher. Educator programs can begin the change we need in schools by challenging and resisting cultural and linguistic hegemony in their classrooms.

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