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## Practicing What We Preach: A Collaborative Approach to Staff Development

- This paper discusses the impact of an intensive, hands-on, research-based approach to staff development. It focuses on the experiences of teachers of language minority students (grades K-12) who took part in a 4-day literacy development institute. The paper challenges traditional, teacher-centered and teacher-dominated teaching practices. In particular, it challenges teaching practices that ignore or deny the knowledge that learners bring with them. It also confirms the need to personally experience instructional practices that are advocated for other learners and the value of reflection as a means to learn.

*What a good four days! How connected we feel as a group from what we have experienced here. I expected to feel lonely this week. Part of me was looking forward to being alone and I purposely did not mix at first, or give of myself in any way. But the way the writing workshops and literature studies were conducted made me want to invest myself—to be a part of what was going on. . . The greatest strength of the institute was that it provided an environment that was safe and that showed us that we are writers and that our opinions and experiences and feelings are interesting and important to others. This is exactly what we want to communicate to our kids. If someone had lectured me that I must create such an environment in my classroom, I would have agreed, but not understood. Having experienced it, I understand, and having understood, I may indeed succeed in my classroom. . . I understand more about the impact the environment and the attitude toward writing and reading can have on the writer.*

*Angela, teacher-participant*

This reflection was written by a participant in a literacy development summer training institute for teachers of language minority students in grades K-12. We spent four long, intense, and sometimes exhausting days together. Two of the authors, Katharine Samway and Lucinda (Cindy) Alvarez, taught in the institute; one of the authors, Frances Morales, attended it as a participant.

The institute was organized around what we considered to be three literacy-enhancing activities that would be new experiences for the participants: writers' workshop,<sup>1</sup> literature study,<sup>2</sup> and written and oral reflection. All three activities are based on the premise that students learn to read and write by reading and writing meaningful texts. Taking advantage of opportunities to reflect is a major step in developing an analytical or spectator stance and is considered by many to be at the heart of literate behavior (e.g., Applebee, 1978; Heath, 1985). It is likely that teachers who develop an analytical stance are more inclined to move from the traditional role of teacher as acquiescent enforcer of predetermined curriculum to one of self-directed redefiner of curriculum and instructional practices. We believe this is an important step for teachers to take. We also hoped that oral and written reflections would provide us with feedback, thereby enabling us to better meet the needs and concerns of the participants.

At the conclusion of the institute the participants wrote reflections, and Angela's sentiments were mirrored in the others over and over again. We read all of them in the car on a late afternoon in July as the three of us drove from the heat of the Central California Valley to the San Francisco Bay area. The more moderate weather that greeted us as we went through the ultra-modern, windmill-studded Altamont Pass coincided with a keen awareness of how exhilarated and exhausted we were feeling. This exhilaration could be sensed also in the written reflections that we read. After staff development activities we are usually tired, but this felt different. Why was this? As we neared Oakland we speculated that the physical and emotional invigoration and exhaustion that we were all feeling was directly related to the format of the institute, as Angela suggested also.

For the previous four days we had been involved with an approach to learning and teaching that we had not experienced previously, not as staff developers, not as student-participants. We had been determined to avoid a teaching role that has most recently been criticized by the Higher Education Research Program: "Too many professors still stand as tellers of truth, inculcating knowledge in students; too many students sit and listen passively—or not at all" (The Business of the Business, 1989). Instead of relying heavily on a lecture format, as one frequently encounters at the university level, we devoted large chunks of time each day to experiencing first hand what it is to be a reflective, literate person. Although we organized each day so that practice and theory were integrated, we allowed

more time for actually reading, writing, and reflecting than we did to formal presentations on theory. In addition to leading the institute, Cindy and Katharine also participated as comembers of the group, thereby entering into a collaborative relationship with the rest of the group.

### Genesis of the Institute Format

We have provided staff development for many years and have become increasingly disenchanted with its design and scope. For the most part we have met with teachers for short periods of time, often for no more than a few hours, and the circumstances of these brief meetings have dictated that we assume the role of performers. Generally we have not had time (or have told ourselves that we have not had time) to model in staff development sessions what we have been advocating for participants' classrooms. For example, we have emphasized the need for teachers to move beyond a view of teaching and learning that underscores the teacher as the "all-knower" (one who determines what will be learned and when it will be learned) to one that acknowledges that students must be more responsible for and invested in their learning. Often, however, we have heard ourselves apologizing to groups of teachers for actually relying heavily on practices that we are most critical of, such as spending too much time talking at, rather than with, learners. After we have returned from these staff development sessions we have rarely known the extent to which our work has had an impact on the lives and practices of teachers and students. At our most honest and introspective moments we have doubted that it has actually had much impact, after the initial flush of excitement.

Over the years that we have been staff developers we have also been graduate students. Our experiences as students have underscored for us the limitations of more traditional, teacher-centered and teacher-dominated teaching modes. For example, as students we have been encouraged to regard our teachers as infallible interpreters of knowledge and ourselves as the metaphorical empty cup just waiting to be filled with information and brilliant insights. Our personal experiences as students and teachers have been challenged, confirmed and enhanced by reading research that has investigated the nature of native and nonnative language and literacy development (e.g., Bruner, 1983; Calkins, 1986; Cazden, 1979; Goodman, 1982; Graves, 1983; Heath, 1985; Krashen, 1984; Rigg & Enright, 1986; Snow, 1977; Urzúa, 1987; Wells, 1986; Wong Fillmore, 1976). This research has shown us that language and literacy development are enhanced when:

- (a) students' interests and needs drive the curriculum,
- (b) students are allowed to learn about the world while also discovering what language is and how language works,

(c) students are allowed to engage in authentic reading and writing opportunities, and

(d) a collaborative and interactive environment is present in which students are both learners and teachers.

We wanted to build upon these findings in the summer institute.

We collaborated extensively on the planning of the institute and were determined to replicate this collaboration in the daily activities, hoping that this would underscore the notion that students as well as teachers are possessors of knowledge. It seemed essential to involve participants in hands-on experiences with key elements in literacy instruction that we would advocate. We also felt that we needed to provide ample time for reflections, both oral and written, an aspect of learning that is rarely attended to in staff development programs. In these ways we hoped that the teachers would have a better understanding of literacy learning and teaching, as well as have time to reflect upon and redefine the issues in ways that would be responsive to and extend their own philosophies of learning and teaching. We hypothesized that if the teachers had opportunities to personally experience the reading, writing, and reflective processes that we would be advocating in the institute, there would be a greater likelihood that their students would have similar opportunities once school began in September.

The following account describes the 4-day experience and the influence that it had on those who were involved, including ourselves. Field notes and reflections, written by us and other members of the institute before, during, and after the time that we spent together illustrate key points.

### What Happened

Each day's schedule was designed to provide first-hand experiences with classroom practices, presentations on the theory upon which the practices are based, and time for reflection.

Figure 1.

**Sample schedule of theoretical presentations interspersed with reading and writing activities and time for reflection.**

- 8:30- 9:00 Reflection time (a time to orally reflect on the previous day's activities)
- 9:00-10:30 Writing and writing conferences
- 10:30-10:45 Reflecting on the writing process
- 10:45-11:45 Theoretical overview and discussion of writing processes
- 11:45-12:45 Lunch and browsing through materials
- 12:45- 2:00 Literature study session

2:00- 2:15 Reflecting on literature study experience

2:15- 2:30 Selections from literature read aloud

2:30- 3:00 Written reflections and browsing through resources

In addition to the more formal theoretical presentations, sessions devoted to practical experiences contained information on reading and writing processes.

Two overarching features characterized much of what happened over the course of the four days. The most obvious feature was the emergence of a powerfully collaborative environment. As we had hoped, members of the group spent a great deal of time collaborating with one another in writers' workshop and literature study sessions. However, Katharine and Cindy had not anticipated the degree to which participants would share their personal feelings with one another or establish relationships with other participants. The second feature was the group members' growing awareness of what it means to be a literate person, an awareness that was intimately related to the reading and writing that we did.

### Emergence of a Collaborative Environment

We were aware that the establishment of a collaborative environment could be hampered by elements out of our control, such as time constraints and the fact that most of the participants would not know each other. We were also keenly aware of possible pitfalls related to the physical environment and the fact that we had not worked together before. These factors were reflected in a journal entry that Katharine wrote on the first day of the institute:

*I'm more than a little nervous, not really knowing people, not sure how people will respond to what we are planning/will do, not sure how the three of us will work out together. I kept on waking up last night and a persistent nagging revolved around the room set-up. The way we had it last night was so traditional, authoritarian—front table and six tables in rows facing the front. Cindy and Frances came in this morning and rearranged it. Still not the best, but it feels more comfortable.*

As this entry indicates, it was clear to us that the physical environment, a symbolic entity, could either help or hinder the attaining of the collaborative goal. We therefore returned to the college early in the morning, before the institute began, and rearranged the room that we would be working in. Huffing and puffing, we pushed and pulled the rows of tables and chairs into a circular arrangement and hid the lectern under a table in a corner of the room. By the time we had finished our early morning labors, professional books and children's literature occupied the tables and benches that bordered

the walls, and colorful posters that evoked the benefits and pleasures of reading adorned the walls.

Once the institute got underway our concern for establishing a collaborative, interactive atmosphere became paramount. When we realized that the institute would begin in a very traditional way (by means of an introductory speech from the dean of the college where the institute was held) we cringed, concerned that such a simple gesture would undermine our attempts to model nonautocratic classroom practices. At lunchtime we shared with each other our alarm at the way in which we had maintained the status quo of one person (the teacher) talking while all others (the students) listened. We had taken turns to describe our backgrounds, to discuss institute requirements, and to explore theoretical perspectives that underlie our understanding of literacy learning and teaching. Participants listened to our formal presentations attentively. They laughed courteously at anecdotes. They dutifully and, in some cases, furiously took notes on what we said. As we talked we began to feel uneasy. We were torn by a real need to establish the theoretical groundwork for the institute and by a realization that the more time we spent talking at the group about literacy the less time we would engage in and understand literacy-enhancing activities and model and establish an interactive-collaborative learning environment.

The participants' polite acquiescence to our formal presentations contrasted markedly with their spirited involvement in the hands-on, small group experiences that are integral to writers' workshop and literature study. After Katharine made a presentation on findings in writing research, she switched to modelling topic generation. This is an important first step when establishing a writers' workshop as, instead of being assigned topics to write on, students are given responsibility for generating and writing on topics that they are familiar with and care about. After listing and briefly talking about four or five topics that she might write on, Katharine asked everybody to generate their own lists of topics and then share their lists in groups of three. Soon the sound of a single voice lecturing to a group of listeners was replaced by a stream of animated conversation. When sharing our writing topics we did not merely read aloud our lists. Instead, we began relating highly personalized anecdotes that we wanted to write about. These anecdotes included accounts of first teaching experiences, events surrounding the births of children, criminal acts that we had either witnessed or been the victims of, and cherished childhood memories. We got to know each other as we shared the topics we listed and learned about similarities in our interests and background experiences. For example, Frances and Olga shared a common interest—the death of parents. Frances also learned that others in her response group were familiar with agricultural work or living in the countryside, experiences that she wanted to write about. In fact, her decision to write about her childhood experi-

ences picking cotton in Texas was validated in part by the knowledge that this experience was shared and esteemed by others.

At this point in the day Katharine and Cindy began to relax more and to feel reassured that their original goal of collaboration was attainable after all. We were convinced that the rest of the group was feeling as relieved as we were as we moved away from the autocratic *talking at* to the more interactive and collaborative *being involved with*. Our initial conclusion was supported by reflections written at the end of the institute, such as Margaret's:

*By presenting the program to us, as we would to a class, [it has] made the information meaningful. It also created an atmosphere of trust, honesty and friendship which allowed us to share more and enrich our experiences, giving more meaning.*

Little did we know, however, that many members of the group were initially uncomfortable with this aspect of the institute format. They were ill at ease with and not prepared for the collaborative, hands-on approach we were advocating. One participant, Rosa, put it this way:

*I was skeptical at first, and others were too. I was thinking it would be a lecture format with students taking notes. It [the format] threw you at first.*

Like Rosa, Angela was skeptical. She confessed later that she spent most of the first two days of the institute resisting the hands-on, participatory format and comparing it unfavorably with previous staff development experiences. In fact, after rereading the reflections that she had written during the institute, she wrote to us, "I didn't express the rebellion I remember feeling." She told us later that on the second day of the institute she began to come to terms with her original resistance and entered into the spirit of the collaborative environment, as the following excerpt from her reflections log illustrates:

*I'm more relaxed today—I think because I know more about what to expect. Today I'm not fighting my expectations. I "got into" my writing this morning and I think the conferencing had something to do with it. My companions were so accepting of what I did write that it empowered me to go on—even though going on meant really starting over. It will be interesting to see how the conferencing affects me tomorrow because I do like what I wrote and will want to stick with it.*

Angela's involvement in and commitment to the institute began only after she got involved in her own writing and had experienced a genuine and supportive writing conference.

During writing conferences we shared and responded to one another's writing. From these experiences we received guidance that helped us revise and improve upon what we wrote. Frances described her experience with conferences and the revisions that grew out of them in the following reflection:

*I felt better writing about picking cotton in Texas after I received feedback from the participants in my small group. They asked questions about how I felt getting up so early in the morning, who else worked with me, and generally they encouraged me to expand and add more of my feelings to the piece. At night as I sat in bed trying to decide whether to read one of the articles or write, I decided to continue writing. As I wrote, I felt I was re-living some of those experiences and realized how important they still are to me. The next day I shared the piece with one of the participants and she commented on how improved it was. On the fourth day of the institute, and after much hesitancy, I volunteered to read my piece out loud to the whole group. As I read, I placed myself in Texas when I was a child. I read conscious of an audience and yet aware that what I was sharing was a part of me and my family. The group's favorable response to the story through their nodding, their clapping, and questions asked at the end gave me a sense of accomplishment as a writer and the feeling of a bond with the participants.*

As Frances pointed out, in addition to facilitating discussions on the craft of writing, conferences also became a time when we shared feelings and personal experiences. In essence, we got to know each other through our writing and the writing conferences. For many of us, this collaborative support eventually extended beyond our classroom. Several of us discovered that the audience for our writing included people who were not present at the institute, such as family members. In these cases we took our writing with us and worked on it later. Frances commented on this process in the following way:

*I was glad we had more time after the institute to work on our stories. I had gotten feedback from the participants after reading the story aloud and I wanted to incorporate this into it. I also wanted to share the story with some of my immediate family members since I knew that the topic was a significant part of their lives as well. As anticipated, my two sisters, brother-in-law, and mother all could relate to the story and offered other information that could enrich it. For example, my brother-in-law*

*talked about the significance of using a gunny sack versus a canvas sack when picking cotton. My oldest sister translated the story to my mother; both were very moved by it and after crying a little went on to clarify events that I did not remember too well.*

As this reflection notes, as relationships with one another developed, we became invested in the writing of others as well as in our own writing. One group of three teachers that met several times to confer on their writing rejoiced over their accomplishments as writers and felt a sense of commitment to each other, as Susan's reflection illustrates:

*Because we were members of a team we felt special about Sally's piece. The fact that she stuck with the process and refined her piece validated the process for all of us.*

Although Sally was responsible for her own writing, she was not left alone. Instead, she was able to both benefit from input from her peers and contribute to their writing processes.

The group's experiences with conferences underscored the notion that we are all learners. Even those of us who had previous experiences conferring about our own and others' writing learned something new. For example, Cindy came to realize how important it is to acknowledge what students write, rather than to despair over what is not written:

*I had been involved in conferencing experiences that were much more directive in nature. Here conferences helped me discover what I was writing rather than concentrate on what I had not written. In my previous experiences with students I had concentrated on what was missing. It was the same for literature studies. That is, I tended to lament what was absent in the discussion rather than celebrate and build upon what was present.*

As Cindy's reflection reveals, participants came to grips with their own meanings when discussing their writing as well as when discussing published literature in the context of literature study sessions. Several participants chose to read Yukio Mishima's (1982) "Swaddling Clothes," and during the first session they shared their reactions to and interpretations of the short story. When participants exclaimed, "I never thought of that," it became immediately clear that they were extending each other's understanding of the story through being exposed to the insights and interpretations of their peers, some of whom were familiar with the author's work. Cindy responded to this experience with the following entry in her reflection log:

*I'm really surprised by the intensity and diversity of the participants' involvement. Many spoke of the social commentary implicit in Mishima's writing and debated a variety of viewpoints. Despite this variability, it was interesting to see how one person's comments triggered another's.*

As this entry illustrates, we did not strive for consensus. We argued, challenged each other, sometimes disagreed, searched for differences in understanding, and celebrated those differences. As we learned about one another's perceptions of a short story or novel, we extended our own understanding in ways that would have been unlikely had we worked alone or been reliant on one person's (the teacher's?) interpretation. Donna commented on this aspect when she said during a morning reflection time, "We're able to go more in-depth with the story. Literature study is exciting, [it offers] different perspectives." On the final day of the institute Katharine reiterated this view in her log:

*The Literature Studies group today was really quite magnificent. Hearing so many incredibly rich insights—*aspects of The Eyes of the Amarrillis [Babbitt, 1977] that I hadn't even considered. It confirmed one of the underlying principles that we have been working on—that knowledge does not reside in the mind and mouth of only one (authoritarian) person. I had been nervous, but the group's involvement dispelled that. They didn't need a leader. Do children really?**

The richness available in collaborative learning experiences was underscored for Katharine by the realization that she did not need to be the all-knower who would lead the group.

Despite the amount of meaning-making that went on during writing conferences and literature study sessions, there were times when Cindy and Katharine longed for more interaction. On the first day we were disappointed that participants were reluctant to talk during the periods for oral reflection that followed each major activity. We had expected that after their involvement with "real" reading and writing, the group would be full of burning questions and pressing concerns. Instead, these opportunities for reflection turned into periods of silence that we felt compelled to fill. At the end of the first day, after the three of us had dinner together and rehashed the day's activities, Katharine wrote in her journal:

*[I feel] grateful and maybe cowed that Cindy had to point out that I didn't allow time for silence when we had the large group feedback session [at the end of the day].*

The next day we vowed to keep quiet during the oral reflection time that began the day. After an interminable pause, Betty volunteered to read what she had written at the end of the previous day:

*I appreciate the opportunity of listening to a book read to me, whether by a student or by my teacher today! It is a special experience, a joyful one, to have a new story brought to me with the same love I feel when I find a special book to share with listeners I care for.*

Others responded with courteous smiles as she read her impressions of the read-aloud time that ended the previous day's session. Her contribution was followed by another lengthy pause. All eyes were upon us. We resisted this cue, smiled encouragingly (we hoped), averted our eyes, and kept quiet. Our efforts were rewarded. Fran honestly and simply told of how insecure she felt during the previous day's literature study session: "I had to grapple with the story. I'm so illiterate. I feel illiterate. It's shocking." Immediately others joined in and began expressing their insecurities with reading and writing and commenting on how the previous day's activities had led to an increased understanding of their own reading and writing processes. It was then that we began to realize that something was happening that we had not planned for. Not only were we, as a group, participating in classroom activities that enhance literacy, but we were coming to grips with what it means to be a literate person.

### Renewing Our Literacy

As the participants became involved with real reading and writing they found themselves struggling with their own literacy. For some, the experience renewed their personal commitment to reading and writing. For others it meant having to deal with the fact that they did not consider themselves either readers or writers. Frances frankly admitted her own insecurities about reading and writing when she wrote:

*Being able to say, "I am one who reads and writes" is a goal that I set for myself as I participated in the four days of the summer institute. I do not consider myself a reader or writer even though I like to go to bookstores and browse through books or write technical reports at work when needed.*

*It is almost embarrassing to admit that making time to read or write demands from me a conscious effort, just like making time to jog. Once I'm jogging I really enjoy it. It's just the "getting started" that demands a conscious effort. . . Reading and writing is not an internalized habit yet, like flossing my*

*teeth, but I feel more comfortable with it and personally satisfied. It's like discovering a whole new way of life which is invigorating not only to me but to others around me.*

Like so many of us, Frances was coming to grips with her sense of herself as a literate being. Some of us began to see how this has an impact on our teaching. For example, in her third day's written reflection, Angela began to make a link between her role as teacher and her role as literate being as she connected her personal and professional development:

*I think I'm getting more out of this workshop personally than professionally. That is, my focus now is on enjoying my writing and reading and also on learning to talk about them. On the other hand I recognize that whatever I do that makes me grow as a person reflects positively on me as a teacher. . . I have been comparing the McCracken workshops to this one. I took away more concrete ideas and songs and methods and management techniques from that one than I will take away with me from this. But from this one I will come away with a new realization about myself. I am a writer. I not only prepare children to be able to write, but I can write. I think I knew that at some level before but now I really believe it.*

Andrea made a similar connection when she wrote about how she needs to develop as a writer if she is going to help her students grow as writers.

*I found out some of the skills I need to develop in order to be able to work on that area comfortably with children. The skill that I am referring to is WRITING. I have never felt comfortable writing. I don't think I'm a good writer nor is it an activity that I particularly enjoy doing. However, this seminar has provided me with a process which, if used, is bound to help me improve in putting my thoughts and feelings in print.*

In some cases the structure and activities of the institute challenged us to reconsider aspects of literacy that had previously lain dormant, as the following reflection written by Alfredo at the end of the institute illustrates:

*It seems a strange thing, indeed, for me to realize that only now do I know what "literacy" is. It is more than reading and writing. It cannot be conferred on one person or by another. Rather, it is not unlike a seed residing in each of God's children awaiting someone to encourage its germination. I carry away*

*with me today the fiercest desire to deal with who and what I am before I die. This institute has provided [me with] the hope that it can be seriously attempted through reading/writing. This liberation is what a truly human education ought to inspire in all of us. Our students back home are waiting. Waiting for that liberation. I think I can help now. I think I understand the PROCESS of empowerment through literacy as a result of this institute.*

Alfredo is essentially challenging us to reconsider our role as literacy teachers in a profound way. He suggests that we must challenge ourselves to see literacy teaching as the sociopolitical act that it is.

### Final Thoughts

In many respects preparing for the institute was not easy. The planning was incredibly time consuming. For example, three full days were spent putting together a 30-minute videotape, only a small part of which was shown during the institute. Days were spent developing and redesigning the schedule, down to 5-minute segments. Some of the time and effort was no doubt a consequence of the collaborative planning. We bantered and even bickered as we decided what areas to cover and how much time to devote to each. Despite our differences, however, we found it much more stimulating to work together on the planning of the institute than alone. When one of us came to a dead end, the other would forge ahead.

Although the institute was successful, we are still grappling with organizational issues. We tried to cover too much material in four days, and the days were very long, particularly when the optional evening meetings and the readings each night are taken into consideration. One area of concern for us was the difficulty of balancing the need for theoretical perspectives with practical experiences. On the Monday following the last day of the institute Katharine was considering the strengths and weaknesses of the institute and wrote:

*In retrospect, I'm beginning to think we didn't do enough with theory [and] research findings. This was a trade-off as we wanted people to experience [writing and reading in a collaborative environment] first-hand, and to think and reflect upon their experiences. We ended up eliminating sessions when Cindy and I would have more formally shared our [research] findings—revising, the reading/writing connection, etc. Although I wish we had had time to do it all, I don't regret our decision to allow time each day (I was going to write "plenty" but there certainly wasn't an abundance) for writing and discussing literature.*



Although we were unsure of the amount of time to devote to theory and practice, teachers clearly need to authentically share their knowledge, as well as their questions and concerns.

What have been the longer term consequences of this approach to staff development? The institute experiences encouraged Cindy and Katharine to insist on more intensive, long-term contacts with teachers, instead of the 1-, 2-, or 3-hour workshops that had previously characterized their work. Since then we have led semester- and year-long seminars for teachers, and several of the summer institute participants have been members of these groups. Active teacher support groups have come into being as an outgrowth of these seminars. We have just completed a semester-long teacher-as-researcher seminar that will continue beyond its original time boundaries because participants want to continue to meet together to explore and discuss mutual interests. The terms *seminar* and *semester* can conjure up images of formal entities that come neatly to closure at the end of a prescribed time; this has not happened.

We have heard from many of the teachers and they have shared with us dramatic changes in their teaching that have evolved since the summer institute. For example, Alfredo has been successfully implementing literature study sessions with his nonnative English-speaking high school students, and he has been rewarded with the discovery that his students can enjoy and can discuss literature. Angela frequently celebrates with us entries from dialog journals that she and her kindergarten students have been writing in and is continually alert to the wealth of information about each child that these entries reveal to her as teacher. Angela and Alfredo and other teachers with whom we have learned and worked have come to understand and appreciate their own professionalism. This is manifested in their active roles as staff developers and planners of conferences for themselves and their educator peers.

We believe that the type of intensive, research-based, hands-on, collaborative staff development approach that we have discussed is an important and viable alternative to more traditional types of staff development. In this article we have tried to show what can happen when teachers listen more than they talk, when our voices are as conspicuous for their silence as for the pearls of wisdom that pour out of them. We have also tried to show what can happen when we emulate in our staff development sessions learning experiences that we are advocating for other learners. An unexpected consequence of this institute was discovering how staff development can be a powerful source of renewal for everybody involved. ■

#### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our fellow participants in the summer literacy institute for teachers of language minority students that we were privileged to work with. Their insights inspired us to consider writing this article.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Writers' workshop has been described and discussed extensively by Atwell (1987), Calkins (1986), and Graves (1983). The impact of writers' workshop on nonnative English-speaking students had been discussed by Samway (1987a, 1987b) and Urzua (1986, 1987).

<sup>2</sup>Students participating in literature study sessions first choose a book, short story, poem, essay, and so forth, from a selection of fine children's literature. After they have read the text, they meet with their teacher and other students who have read the same text to discuss and share their responses to it. Because literature study is a time for students to explore literature and analyze the author's craft, teachers do not ask questions designed to check students' comprehension. Instead, just like other participants in the session, teachers share their own perspectives on and responses to a book. Successful study sessions are characterized by conversations in which participants build upon and extend each others' meanings. Literature study has been discussed by Bird and Alvarez (1987); Edelsky (1988); Edelsky, Bird, Alvarez, and Norton (1987); and Eeds and Wells (1989).

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