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GRADUATES' REPORTS OF ADVOCATING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Beginning teachers, who graduated from a credential program focused on preparing advocates for equity and with attention to teaching English language learners (ELLs), had reported in surveys being well prepared to teach ELLs and promote equity. Focus groups illuminated teachers' reports of ways they advocated for ELLs. Reported classroom acts included creating and maintaining safe environments for English language use and development, differentiating instruction and designing interventions for ELLs, and responding to sociopolitical issues related to race, language, and class. Reported advocacy beyond the classroom included seeing inequity and addressing it with lunchtime and after-school tutorials and clubs, and with family contacts and home visits. Sometimes, such advocacy also included critiquing institutional practices or policy, and proposing or building alternatives. Three cases illustrate accounts of school challenges in meeting needs of ELLs, and document possibilities for how advocacy for ELLs, even in the first years of teaching, can be pursued.

Keywords: *English language learners; advocacy; new teachers; teacher education*

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of immigrants to the United States (Nieto, 2002). Students in U.S. schools increasingly come from a variety of economic, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. These students bring diverse experiences and expectations to school. In California alone, according to the California Department of Education (2005), English language learners (ELLs) number over 1.5 million, with more than 1.3 million Spanish speakers (or 85.3%). A persistent achievement gap exists between ELLs and native English speakers (Kindler, 2002), and students from non-English-speaking backgrounds have higher dropout

rates than English-background students (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000).

To minimize this dropout rate, promote learning for ELLs, and close the achievement gap, both new and experienced teachers need preparation and support. Home cultures, socioeconomics, home languages, time of immigration, parents' relationship with the school, and other factors also shape the educational experiences and needs of ELLs. Teachers credentialed as bilingual educators typically develop more advanced and specialized knowledge, and experiences for bilingual and English language development (ELD) contexts. However, particularly in urban and rural contexts in the United

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States, an increasing number of teachers have ELLs of varying degrees of English proficiency enrolled in their courses. Teachers require preparation to meet the needs of these students.

In this article, we draw upon a 5-year investigation of a teacher credential program with a strong record of preparing teachers for work with ELLs. The program tested an innovative model centered on developing advocates for equity. Related studies found that the program infused issues of cultural and linguistic diversity throughout the curriculum (Athanases & Martin, 2001), and that graduates reported the program prepared them well to meet the needs of diverse youth, and ELLs in particular, and to assume the role of advocate for these students (Merino, Martin, & Pryor, 2001). For the present study, we used focus groups of program graduates to examine work with ELLs. We asked the following research questions: (a) What did graduates report about ways they engaged in acts of advocacy for ELLs in and beyond the classroom? (b) What challenges arose in this work?

FRAMEWORK

Preparation to Teach ELLs

In U.S. schools, teachers work with a growing number of students for whom English is an additional language. Debates about how best to educate these students focus on issues in instruction, assessment, and mainstreaming. However, educators agree that ELLs must develop English proficiency and meet demanding standards (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). One central issue is responsibility: Who should address the needs of ELLs? Researchers emphasize the need to prepare all teachers to address the language and content-area needs of English learners (August & Hakuta, 1997; Villegas et al., 1995). ELL teachers in schools can be part-time teachers, permanent tenured teachers, part of an ESL (English as a second language) and/or bilingual program, if both exist, part of support services, or part of subject-area departments and grade levels. Often content-area teachers and teachers of ELLs function in separate school

worlds, and ELLs remain locked in ESL ghettos (Valdés, 2004). However, mainstream teachers of all content areas and all levels of responsibility for students need to develop instruction to meet the needs of ELLs.

Teachers of ELLs must address language needs (oral language proficiency, literacy development, and skills in meeting language demands in content areas) and cultural needs (including understanding classroom norms and literacy expectations; de Jong & Harper, 2005). These teachers need to be able to differentiate instruction, develop knowledge of strategies and techniques for second-language development, and work closely with families and communities (Goodwin, 2002). Teachers also need to be savvy about issues of language self-esteem as ELLs work to develop English proficiency (Garcia, 1996). Clearly, teachers need to develop a sense of language as both a personal and national resource and not a problem (Escamilla, Chávez, & Vigil, 2005).

Despite these needs, new teachers report inadequate preparation to address learning of ELLs (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002; Gándara et al., 2005). According to a national survey on experiences of U.S. teachers in work with ELLs, less than 13% have received any preparation or professional development in teaching ELLs, but 41% have taught these students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Even when teacher education programs address diversity in curriculum, linguistic diversity generally remains unaddressed (Zeichner, 2003). Efforts have been impaired by insufficient placements in schools with adequate numbers of ELLs, lack of supervisor knowledge to guide relevant instruction, and a slim research base that has yet to inform educators about which disciplinary and pedagogical bases best prepare teachers for such work in which kinds of communities (Merino, 1999). There has been, however, some discussion in the literature regarding the pedagogical content knowledge teachers need related to linguistic diversity (Adger, Snow, & Christian, 2002; August & Hakuta, 1997).

A key problem is lack of faculty preparation to address ELL issues in teacher education

coursework. Both teacher education faculty and students may benefit from explicit attention to myths and problematic beliefs held about English language, language and learning, ELLs' native languages, and ELLs and their families (Meskill, 2005). Even when a program engages in substantive professional development to prepare faculty to integrate ELL issues, individual instructor changes may come more readily than program-wide infusion of linguistic-diversity content (Costa, McPhail, Smith, & Brisk, 2005). Also, preservice teachers may learn concepts about accommodating instruction to ELL needs, but faculty may provide few practical tools and practices for doing the work (McDonald, 2005). Moreover, a focus on standards, scripted curricula, and techniques in the current climate of standardized testing leads to a "mispreparation" of teachers, who fail to develop diverse and flexible repertoires of strategies for working with an increasing number of ELLs (Balderrama, 2001).

In addition to these concerns, unprepared teachers (generally, without teacher credentials) are unequally distributed to low-income schools serving mostly students of color, many of them ELLs (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Shields et al., 2001). This is particularly problematic in regions with high numbers of ELLs. In California, for example, teachers reported four major challenges of working with ELLs: communication with parents, lack of knowledge of home and community matters, lack of sufficient time to teach English and content, and the extremely diverse academic and linguistic needs of ELLs (Gándara et al., 2005). For new teachers, in particular, with or without teacher education, such challenges can be daunting.

Learning to Advocate for ELLs

Though learning to develop K-12 students' basic and critical thinking skills of content areas is central to teacher education, also important are the issues of equity and inclusion (Cochran-Smith, 2005). By equity we mean a concern that funding should go to those in

greatest need (Kohl & Witty, 1996); instruction that targets high achievement for all learners—working to close achievement gaps (Cohen & Lotan, 1997); and learner support that is differentiated to ensure equitable outcomes (Haycock, 2001). In the case of ELLs, instructors with responsibility for teaching these students need to pay particular attention to resource distribution. This may include availability of texts and materials that both challenge and support ELLs (Oakes & Saunders, 2004). It also includes availability of human resources in support of work with these students, and resources for parents and families.

Bilingual educators in particular need to be conscious advocates for language rights and resources of ELLs (Hornberger, 2004). Policy initiatives (such as Proposition 227, California's English Only initiative that passed in the late 1990s) often constrain teachers' use of students' first languages in mainstream classrooms. Even within larger policy environments, local environments shape teachers' decision making on language policy. Therefore, teachers of ELLs need not only language and methods but also knowledge of how their decision making on language use in class is in fact language-policy development (Varghese & Stritikus, 2005). As advocates for ELLs, teachers may need to scrutinize curriculum and instruction, as well as assessment in a time of high-stakes testing. Testing ELLs in their first language, for example, can yield more positive results than English-only testing (Escamilla et al., 2005). In these various ways, then, an advocate for ELLs is equipped with knowledge, skills, and dispositions for working with these learners and develops an understanding that these students may need particular advocacy.

Studies of the Possible: One Teacher Education Program's Attention to English Learners

Clearly we now know more about teachers' perceptions of the need to work with ELLs and of their reports of feeling inadequately prepared to do so (Balderrama, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Gándara et al., 2005). Researchers need to document not just the

probable (what likely will occur) but also the possible—what can be done, and how it is organized, developed, and pursued (Shulman, 1983). This means studying graduates who report feeling well prepared to meet ELLs' needs. For this reason, the present study, part of a larger research program, examined reports of graduates from a program with a history of attention to ELLs and some perceived success in preparing teachers to meet these students' needs (Athanases & de Oliveira, in press-a; Athanases & Martin, 2006; Merino et al., 2001).

The program is part of a California university that, at time of the research, credentialed between 105 and 125 teachers each year. Teacher education faculty included research professors, clinical faculty (who served as lead supervisors for student teaching), and K-12 adjunct faculty. Students completed credentials designed to increase knowledge of culture and diversity, and of ways to effectively teach students developing English proficiency. Student teaching lasted an academic year in diverse, generally high-need urban and rural schools, with an average of 60% of students on free or reduced lunch. Program graduates tended to work in high-need schools and remained in teaching at unusually high rates (Merino et al., 2001). In line with other U.S. efforts to recruit and support new teachers of color (e.g., Bennett, 2002), this program made such efforts and moved from no students of color to an average of 27% in 4 years, and slightly higher rates later (Merino & Holmes, 2002). The program articulated roles for new teachers to adopt for work in diverse schools, with advocate for equity a key role. Led by the director, a Chicana with a history of research in ELL learning issues, teacher educators and students reflected on the advocate role in meetings, faculty retreats, and classes.

Analyses of program documents, syllabi and assignments, student work samples, teacher educator portfolios, and faculty meeting field notes found the program infused attention to cultural and linguistic diversity and equity program-wide (Athanases & Martin, 2001). Assignments and experiences addressed these issues in courses such as cultural diversity and education, language development in the

Chicano child, teaching language-minority students in secondary schools, and communication skills for bilingual teachers. Five different multiple-subjects instructors documented how they prepared teachers to address ELL literacy and language needs across subjects, using group activities, demonstrations, and modeling, applied practice, diagrams, visual cues, dramatic readings, pictures on overheads, hands-on learning, and activity-based instruction. Charts and other visuals illustrated how to organize, assess, and support ELLs in seeing, reading, and recalling information. In their computers class, all multiple-subjects teachers created multimedia projects to assist ELLs with literary elements, incorporating pictures, simple graphics, and sounds to convey information in multiple formats. Math methods required lesson plans with ELL considerations, and guests demonstrated ways to teach about language issues in math and to understand semantics, syntax, and vocabulary in math texts. In secondary science methods, teachers included in lesson plans ways they address language demands for ELLs; three times a year created lessons on "common topics explicitly serving needs of ELLs"; and created and discussed concept maps about teaching science to ELLs. Veteran science teachers demonstrated methods to work with culturally and linguistically diverse youth.

Surveys of more than 300 program graduates indicated new teachers felt well prepared to assume the role of advocate for equity in classrooms and schools, and to meet the language needs of diverse students (Merino et al., 2001). Graduates reported that ELLs' needs prompted acts of advocacy in classrooms and beyond (Athanases & de Oliveira, in press-a). They often traced advocacy to coursework, and reported that long-term school-based apprenticeships aided efforts when supervisors probed on equity in conferences and seminars and when schools included role models as advocates for equity (Athanases & Martin, 2006). Graduates identified several teacher educators as effective in fostering in new teachers a passion for teaching and advocating for ELLs and in modeling a range of relevant strategies. Projects cited as particularly effective included analysis

of a case study of students developing English usage (using work samples, observations, and interviews) and design of an instructional intervention to strengthen learning of a particular ELL in class.

Many teachers cited program attention to acting on behalf of learners rather than complaining of problematic school circumstances, and learning to engage co-advocates among school leaders, staff, colleagues, and parents (Athanases & Martin, 2006). Bilingual teachers reported learning ways to advocate for ELLs that were especially salient for their teaching contexts. Teachers reported learning that other actions new teachers could take included practice in articulating positions on bilingual-education issues; reading studies about bilingual education and practicing talking to a school board about reasons why bilingual education might and might not work; and learning how to survey colleagues and schools about school policies and school political climate as they relate to support for ELLs. Several teachers also reported learning in the program the importance of participating in policy forums on educating ELLs, and described the impact of accompanying an instructor to a government forum where such concerns were debated. These were reports of graduates' preparation to advocate for ELLs. The present study, however, features reports of enacting advocacy for ELLs. The following questions guided the study: (a) What did graduates report about ways they engaged in acts of advocacy for ELLs in and beyond the classroom? (b) What challenges arose in this work?

METHOD

Participants

This study was conducted at a California university credential program. Sixteen teacher educators and more than 300 program graduates participated in the larger study. The present study is informed by reports that drew on the larger database. To increase both candor among research participants and research credibility, the director recruited several outside

researchers and "newcomers" to the program to study program materials, to design and administer a survey, and to recruit for and conduct focus groups of graduates. From a pool of graduates who agreed to participate in focus groups, we selected participants, with little if any knowledge of them as students or new teachers. We included participants from all programs—multiple subjects and secondary (both regular and bilingual)—and a range of secondary subjects (math, science, and English). We recruited 48 participants, but because of last-minute schedule conflicts for some teachers, 38 participated.

Five 3-hour focus groups of 5-10 teachers each were conducted. Slightly more than one third of participants were teachers of color, mostly Mexican American, with several African American and Asian American. Most had taught for 1-3 years, with a few of slightly more experience. Participants' teaching contexts varied, with a preponderance of lower income urban and rural communities, with culturally diverse students and high numbers of ELLs in schools and classes. Urban sites tended to be very poor, often with populations at nearly a third African American, a third Latino (mostly Mexican American), a third Asian of varied ethnicity, and small numbers of White students. Most ELLs were native Spanish speakers, but first languages included Vietnamese, Hmong, Lao, and Russian/Ukrainian. Several rural schools had many children of migrant farm workers. Graduates with bilingual credentials worked in diverse communities and in classes with primarily ELLs, and in some cases in bilingual or ELD classes.

Focus Group Procedures

To promote and tap teachers' reflections on practice, preparation, and professional needs, we used focus groups as a research tool to triangulate other data and to illuminate survey results (Morgan, 1988; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Unlike surveys and structured individual interviews, focus groups allow participants to take some control of conversation by articulating ideas in the context of others' remarks

(Bergin, Talley, & Hamer, 2003), allow participants' voices to be more dominant in the research process (Krueger, 1994), and capture aspects of opinion formation (Fern, 2001). Focus-group discussions began with group brainstorming of things recalled from the credential years, prompted in part by program artifacts displayed on two tables. Talk proceeded through ordered turns, then cross talk, and included moderator probes for elaboration. The moderating style adopted was non-judgmental reflective listening, conveyed through nonverbal communication and verbal means of clarifying, paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, and summarizing (Fern, 2001).

Members of discussions often participate unequally, due in part to gender, cultural norms, and perceived status of group members, and in focus groups men typically tend to dominate and interrupt (Brown, 2000). Our groups had few men, and their participation did not reveal dominance. However, we worked to ensure that no participants were silenced. We attended to nonverbal signs of desire to speak, intervening at times to encourage the silent and discourage the dominant, particularly watching to see if those culturally or linguistically in the minority of otherwise homogeneous groups might withdraw, especially in disagreement. (See Athanases & Martin, 2006, for more details of focus-group procedures.)

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Background data included year-end surveys completed by more than 300 students over 4 years, rating significance of 14 program elements in developing knowledge and skills for work as advocates for all children. (See Athanases & Martin, 2001, for an account of the full data set, and Merino et al., 2001, for selective survey results.) Program documents also served as support data.

Core data analyzed for this study were transcripts and field notes of five focus groups. Teachers reflected on topics, including their current conceptions of advocacy, relevant practices, ways the program did and did not

prepare them for this work, and ways schools supported and constrained their advocacy goals. We audiotaped discussions and changed names later to assure anonymity. We transcribed focus-group discussions and subjected these to a series of procedures to identify units of analysis so that relevant meanings of discussions could be managed, maintained, and explicated (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

We reviewed all five transcripts totaling 300 double-spaced pages plus moderators' reflective notes written directly following focus groups. We developed emerging categories and themes. We found that teachers' conceptions and illustrations of advocacy for ELLs were embedded in narratives. Guided by Bruner (1986), Carter (1993), Connelly and Clandinin (1990), and others, we parsed the narratives for features of story structure. (See Athanases & de Oliveira, in press-a, for details of structure and content of the full corpus of narratives.) For the present study, we repeatedly reviewed and analyzed teachers' actions described in their narratives that exemplify their practices of being advocates for ELLs. Using the constant-comparative method (Merriam, 1998), we analyzed themes that emerged in our repeated readings of these actions. Other discourse data, such as reflections and commentaries on fellow participants' narratives, were used in conjunction with teachers' narratives to support, extend, and refute emerging analyses. While we sought cross-cutting themes, we also examined data for outlier perspectives that might complicate or disconfirm patterns in the data. (Examples of this arose in teachers' perceptions of the quality of their teacher-preparation experiences related to advocating for equity, and are reported in Athanases & Martin, 2006.)

To inform this analysis, we also used the constant-comparative method (Merriam, 1998) to analyze teachers' discussion reports of ways their credential program did and did not prepare them to advocate for ELLs. We balance summary and quotation to capture both patterns and precise illustrations (Morgan, 1988), and use cases to illuminate themes. Italics highlight themes in teachers' language and

their words and phrases; quotation marks signal whole clauses of teacher language.

RESULTS

In all five focus groups, graduates told narratives about ways they advocated for ELLs. We discuss actions the teachers reported, and then highlight particularly complex cases of advocating for ELLs beyond the classroom.

Advocacy for ELLs in the Classroom

Creating and maintaining a safe environment. Teachers reported establishing a safe environment for language use and practice. This environment included ways to enable all ELL students to feel safe to take risks. For example, teachers reported engaging students in speaking when they appeared timid or self-conscious about speaking. Another component was helping ELLs to voice needs and clarifying that they are being heard. An elementary school teacher noted:

I've worked hard to keep my environment very comfortable for my children. If my student is trying to tell me something, they know they can use the white board to try to draw what they're trying to describe to me. They can take my hand and take me to what they're trying to tell me about. That way they feel comfortable to take risks and even sometimes, even when I don't understand her [I say], "Okay, okay, thank you"—knowing that she hears me and that I hear her. And if a child gets upset and needs to talk to me, I'll tell them, "Tell me in Spanish." And I don't know it, but it all comes out and they can just release everything. (Chris, Focus Group, May 29, 2000)

This excerpt shows this teacher's varied means of ensuring that ELLs have a safe place to speak to fellow students and to the teacher. Finally, varied language groups prompted teachers to establish social inclusion, so all groups of ELLs had a safe place to participate in classroom activities and with each other. When students of different language backgrounds appeared excluded, teachers reported intervening to ensure the preservation of a classroom environment that was inclusive.

Diversifying and tailoring instruction for ELLs. Teachers reported diversifying and tailoring their instruction as an act of advocacy to meet learning needs of ELLs. Acts included juggling different kinds and levels of language support. This was due in part to great diversity among ELLs, in terms of home country, first language, English proficiency, cultural norms, reading level, learning style, gender, life history, and behavior. Some classes had many or exclusively ELLs; other times acts involved tailoring instruction to meet the needs of a few ELLs in a more mainstream class. Teachers reported tailoring instruction in varied ways, trying to "juggle" competing needs of diverse students. Daniel, a sixth-grade teacher in a diverse agricultural-based community, noted that after presenting material once, he revisits it for those who need it "a different way, whether tactile, verbal . . . you might have to say it in a bunch of different ways so that every person in the class will understand, and that's where educational equity comes in."

Acts were reported across grades, from kindergarten through high school, and included supports to develop different English skills in listening, reading comprehension, and writing. Teachers also reported balancing curriculum coverage with tailored standards-based instruction. One reported "making lots of modifications for individuals but keeping the group going as a whole" to maintain cohesiveness. Addressing diverse levels of readiness in academic content and literacy in heterogeneous classes was raised by high school teachers of all subjects represented.

Diversifying curriculum, however, was not easy. New high and middle school teachers reported managing a wide range of academic preparation. Numbers on their watch were high for some—32 8th-grade language arts students, 5 times a day; 170 math students over five classes; 130 9th- and 10th-grade English students, half ELLs. Managing so many students on timed class schedules made diversifying lessons difficult and phone calls home fewer. An English teacher described one class:

And you have one student who speaks no English and two students are somewhere else in English, and no money for pull-out programs, and you're

one teacher, and you have 32 students. How do you advocate for equity in your classroom? Copying things in my spare time . . . I find myself at the end of the year just going, "David, read your book." I'm tired. (Leslie, Focus Group, May 29, 2000)

Narratives frequently included *knowledge* of and reports of *preparation* in particular instructional strategies, but challenges in using the knowledge and pedagogy. For instance, a 10th-grade science teacher, formerly a research scientist, remarked, "I still haven't yet found a happy medium on how to deliver this equitable education to them." She noted that the ideal is to set the bar high and modify lessons for those who need it. But, she noted, "In practice it can be extremely difficult." An English teacher, speaking of just one of her five classes, echoed this concern of accommodating students she knows will learn material in very different ways: "That is very hard to do in practice when you're dealing with 35 students . . . But I'm getting better at it this year."

Responding to sociopolitical issues. Teachers mentioned ways they advocated for ELLs when issues such as cultural dominance, racism, and linguisticism filtered down into class. Some students expressed the undervaluing of nonmainstream, non-White cultures, and some resisted hearing students speak languages other than English. In some cases, ELLs expressed internalized biases against nonnative English speakers. In all cases, stories included accounts of special actions, words, or activities teachers used to respond to these issues. One teacher described several Latino students hiding their command of Spanish because it was not perceived either in or out of school as a "prestige language." On one occasion she led a discussion of valuing cultural differences and learning to use each other as language resources. Robert described his school climate: "There is a huge split in that high school of the migrant kids and the 'farmer kids.' There is a very large split of Caucasian/Hispanic. And you can tell walking at lunchtime down the campus." He addressed institutional racism head-on in class, and noted how White students would say, "Huh? What are you talking about?" And

Latino students would respond, "Well, I know what that is." He noted the complexity of working toward equity requires more than programs and staff awareness and community outreach: "It's so much thicker and deeper than the last unit you taught or your goals as a school." Addressing the issues openly in class discussion was one contribution he believed he could make.

Susan, a new third-grade teacher at a rural school with many ELLs in class, told how some "Anglo students" were policing Spanish use in class by ELLs. She responded with a simulation:

I acted like I was speaking a completely different language—it wasn't English, it wasn't Spanish. It was a hard subject and I gave them dittos on it, and I was showing the picture but going "blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." . . . Basically, at the end I said, "Now imagine how all these students who come to this country who are new and have to listen to us speak English all day. How do they feel when they see me or another teacher up there?" And we had a big discussion and we made a circle and they said, "It feels awful, you don't understand the assignment." . . . I was like, even though I'm not supposed to speak Spanish to you guys like by majority I told them that it's their constitutional right to speak whatever language they feel. They should be free to express themselves, when they can't find the words in English. But, that simulation—it opened their eyes. (Susan, Focus Group, July 18, 2000)

Susan, like Robert, directly confronted the issue, using the simulation as tool. Three other teachers in her focus group recalled the power of a similar simulation in which they had participated 1-2 years earlier in the credential program in a math methods class. They reported how their instructor had invited a speaker in to teach in an African dialect and how the experience, and their debriefing of it, had a lasting effect. Susan was the first to report adapting the simulation to her class context to confront linguisticism.

Advocacy for ELLs Beyond the Classroom

Acts of advocacy for ELLs took some teachers beyond the classroom and occurred outside the boundaries of class time. Fourteen of the 38 focus-group participants (or 37%)

reported such acts. Across the narratives that included these acts beyond the classroom on behalf of ELLs, one central theme recurred: *seeing inequity* that warrants redress. Most of the narratives, however, included two additional themes: *challenging or critiquing* institutional practices and *proposing and building alternatives*. We include three teachers' cases that illustrate all three of these themes.

Some teachers reported *seeing inequity* and advocating for ELLs, without critiquing or engaging institutions. These acts were of two kinds. The first involved extending instruction beyond class time and space. Drawing on their knowledge of "classroom interventions" conducted for ELLs during their credential program, several teachers reported continuing the practice, setting the bar higher for a student, designing supports, and assessing language progress. These interventions often included sessions during lunchtime, and before and after school. One teacher reported scheduling meetings that helped her talk with students about "how to help them as learners." Others reported participating in or creating after-school clubs to support literacy development and computer use for ELLs. The second kind of advocacy beyond the classroom, that did not include critique of the institution, was home and family contacts of various kinds. This included getting to know students personally to engage them in language learning. One teacher noted: "I get to know them at home. I call them; I go do visits; I go to their birthday parties. I know my kids really well." In other cases, these contacts engaged family members as co-advocates in plans and interventions for language and academic development.

In contrast to just seeing an inequity that warranted redress, many of the narratives also evidenced two other themes: a *critique of institutional practices* that enable the inequity to occur, and *using action to propose and build an alternative* to the problematic practice. Several of these cases involved locating appropriate material resources for ELL learning at varied language levels, including a hunt for better works to support students transitioning to English. Teachers reported seeing inequity in the lack of such materials in schools, and in texts that were accessible but often merely

picture books and overly simplistic. They *challenged this practice*, as they knew ELLs needed enriching materials that set the bar higher. By looking for resources to strengthen their curriculum for ELLs, teachers *built an alternative* to the inequitable practice of using inferior materials for these students. Several reported working on content integration (Banks, 1995), an infusion of cultural and specific linguistic content into curriculum. One teacher noted the need, because for her students the dominant culture was desired: "The minority culture, whether it has a beautiful rich language with an incredible history, and incredible literature going way back, it doesn't matter, the children just don't want to be identified." She worked at her school site to secure better resources, images of the possible, to help students believe "Oh, I could do this, too. I came from this background, too. She did it, I can do it."

Critiquing institutional practices and building alternatives are rare acts for new teachers who seldom deviate from school norms. Cases that include such acts instantiate the possible (Shulman, 1983), providing needed documentation in the research literature of ways advocacy for ELLs gets developed and pursued. For this reason, we examine three teachers' narratives that illustrate beyond-classroom advocacy for ELLs and involve these acts. These cases are representative of those narratives that included all three themes of beyond-classroom advocacy for ELLs, and have been selected to illustrate a range of acts teachers reported.

Diana: Access to testing and public libraries. Diana had taught kindergarten for 1 year in a very low socioeconomic status (SES) inner-city school with mostly Latino, African American, and Asian students. Diana's acts of advocacy for ELLs started in her classroom, but were prompted by outside institutional practices. Diana's first act involved her critique of tests designed by outsiders. Diana's school had three kindergarten classes being tested: one general, one ELD/English only, one Spanish/English (Diana's). The test examined basic thinking and skills, and was to be administered in Spanish to Diana's students. She noted discrepancies between test versions in, for

example, the number of colors children had to identify and the number of physical movement skills, making the English version more rigorous. Diana administered the Spanish version but used parts of the English one for those she knew could understand it: "I know that the children in my class were perfectly capable of handling some of the material." She knew results would be compared, and she wanted to ensure that her students were not judged intellectually inferior based on a problematic test. She also raised the issue at her site that the tests created by agencies needed scrutiny.

Diana's act involved first *seeing inequities* in the tests and then *critiquing* and *challenging* them. Diana understood the importance of acting against the inequity: "I just felt it was really important that their knowledge be considered as widespread as the children in the other two classes." She *critiqued* the test and *built an alternative*:

I knew that they could handle the material. So I just went ahead and did it kind of orally because there was no place to actually record it in writing. I knew when I was judging their progress of the year that they were comparable to what the scores were in the other classes. (Diana, Focus Group, July 18, 2000)

Diana demonstrates that teachers of ELLs need a personal level of commitment and need to know their students well to be able to act on their behalf. Diana reported another advocacy act for ELLs that involved parents. She noted:

There were times that it became challenging to literally be on constant phone contact with most of the parents because, whenever written notices were sent home at my school site (which occurred 3-4 times a month at regular intervals, and they were printed in Spanish as well as in English), oftentimes the material didn't make it home, which sometimes with kinder it's understandable, but oftentimes it was not read even when it was translated. (Diana, Focus Group, July 18, 2000)

Diana's response to the difficulty illustrates how an advocate moves beyond *seeing* a challenge:

I did quite a lot of phone calling as well as trying to meet with parents when they would drop off children before or pick children up after school.

There were times where it got a little bit tedious because the info was being disseminated; it just wasn't being read. I was concerned in some cases that it might be an issue of being able to read the material. (Diana, Focus Group, July 18, 2000)

In addition to phone calling and meeting with parents, Diana heightened communication with them by structuring a field trip with children and parents to a local library: "Out of my class there were only two children prior to going on this field trip that had actually been to a public library before." She used this as an occasion to introduce the families to resources, making sure all parents and children obtained library cards. Diana went beyond her classroom to communicate with parents and to get them involved. Her case exemplifies that new teachers can perform acts of advocacy for ELLs and their families.

Sondra: Rethinking the calendar. Sondra, a second-year teacher at a middle school with mostly Latino students and 98% on free lunch, told how staff continually discussed children missing school in December for trips to Mexico for family reunions and holiday celebrations. Most of the teachers, she noted, "are not [bilingual-credentialed] and not Hispanic." She noted biases and missed learning opportunities for students:

So, one time we were at a staff meeting, they were complaining yet again about the fact that the students are all gone for the month during Christmas, and that they have to do lessons plans for the students to take, and how difficult this is, and I had to listen to it. It was my first year, but that year I finally decided that I would speak out, and say—hoping not to offend them—but it does not make sense for us as teachers to know a fact about a culture and not fix that fact, instead just complain that they do it and try to get them not to do it. I said, "Instead of complaining and fussing about it, why don't we go on a different calendar year, one that would allow them to have that month off? After all, the calendar was set up for our society because we needed the months off during the harvest, and there are so many year-round tracks that would fit that month off." (Sondra, Focus Group, July 18, 2000)

Sondra's narrative exemplifies how a teacher of ELLs can act after *seeing inequity* that warrants redress. She *challenged* the current

institutional practice and *provided an alternative* calendar. Her use of “finally decided” suggests a culminating realization, one that followed having considered speaking out before actually doing so. Her use of the conjunction “but” is pivotal, signaling how she chose to speak out even though she was still a novice at her school. Her closing (“hoping not to offend them”) remark marks her internal struggle and signals the risk she felt in alienating colleagues even as she made the choice to speak out. Sondra noted:

I saw the lights go on around the room for a couple of people, and we had a new principal and she immediately perked up and liked that and took it to a school board member. We are now working towards trying to implement that. (Sondra, Focus Group, July 18, 2000)

She closed with a coda: “It makes more sense to be culturally sensitive than culturally angry.” Sondra traced her problem-solving stance with colleagues about changing the calendar to accommodate the large number of December family trips to Mexico to a teacher educator’s urging that new teachers avoid complaining and figure out how to resolve school problems of inequity. Other graduates named the same instructor for a range of ways she prepared teachers to speak up about texts and other resources for ELLs, and told how she took students to government forums to educate them about current policy initiatives related to the teaching of ELLs. Sondra’s advocacy exemplifies how a teacher can respond to challenges by considering and proposing an alternative to current practices that seem inequitable for students.

Linda: Toward balanced bilinguals as linguistic role models. Linda taught fifth-/sixth-grade Spanish immersion. She explained what “rubs her wrong” about her principal’s practice of assigning “role models of English” (often low SES White children) to each classroom:

It does not matter that those children have spoken English only. They are not role models always of English, and what it does is give the White children yet more power and takes away from the strength

of the Hispanic children that are truly bilingual. And what I would like to see . . . are balanced bilinguals as the role model for the English speaking, because all you do when you give a Hispanic child a White child that speaks the language is you take away more of their powers; the right to be up the hierarchy in the classroom. (Linda, Focus Group, July 18, 2000)

Linda noted that she preferred language role models who have struggled and gone through the same process of ELD as ELLs in class. She felt the inequity at a deep level: “It gets me that they think, just because they’re White, their language is a role model.”

Problems in Linda’s narrative were complex. First, she noted racism in the administrator’s policy: Even if White, native English-speaking students spoke standard English, she would be concerned that it sends the message that White is better, that only White kids can be models. Second, there was linguisticism in perpetuating the notion that speaking only one language is superior to balanced bilingualism, which could be modeled by native Spanish-speaking Latino children who had developed English proficiency. Third, Linda felt that less than excellent English was presented as ideal from monolingual speakers of English. Fourth, the low SES White kids were not being served either because they were propped up as language role models when in fact they needed lots of language support with standard English. Linda had begun to address her concerns with the administrator. Linda first *saw inequity* in the school’s practice, *challenged* the practice, and *proposed* that balanced bilinguals be included instead.

Linda made warranted points about wrong messages conveyed by making monolinguals (rather than bilinguals) the models, making Whites the models, and making a nonstandard dialect the target/model merely because it is spoken “natively.” But there is more to her opinion that warrants reflection. Linda’s own assessment reveals assumptions about class, and how such issues of linguisticism need to be revisited and discussed in ongoing forums so stances get examined. Linda’s teaching could benefit from reflection on how students from

different social classes and cultural backgrounds may use language in different ways, and that these varieties need to be respected and valued by schools and communities. As Valdés, Bunch, Snow, Lee, and Matos (2005) put it, examining their own judgments about students' language "can help teachers avoid sending the message, either overtly or implicitly, that the language spoken by certain groups of students is in some way inferior to that spoken by others" (p. 132).

DISCUSSION

ELLs are present in many schools throughout the United States. These students, even after being mainstreamed, continue to have particular learning needs (de Oliveira, 2006). New teachers in our study reported advocating for ELLs in classrooms by creating and maintaining safe environments for English-language use and development, differentiating instruction and designing interventions for ELLs, and responding to sociopolitical issues related to race, language, and class. Teachers also reported advocating for ELLs beyond the classroom. Such acts included seeing inequity and addressing it with lunchtime and after-school tutorials and clubs, and with family contacts and home visits. In some cases, such advocacy also included critiquing institutional practices or policy, and proposing or building alternatives.

Much of the work teachers reported may be attributable to having graduated from a program with attention to linguistic diversity and meeting the needs of ELLs suffused program-wide. However, we cannot make this causal claim. Our study has several limitations. First, we sought a representative sample of program graduates, but did not randomly sample. Those who agreed to participate in focus groups may have been more predisposed to a positive evaluation of their experiences in teacher preparation and in their first years of teaching. However, our close look through qualitative data collected in focus-group settings helps reveal persistent challenges that even those who claim to be well prepared may face, and ways new teachers

may be able to respond. Second, even though we monitored our focus-group procedures to ensure that no participants were silenced, we cannot claim that all counterexamples and outlying opinions were expressed. Third, our study relies on self-reports of teachers' advocacy. This work will be strengthened by future efforts to follow selected teachers into their classrooms and school sites for observations of teaching and advocacy in action. Also, interviews with teachers, students, and school and community members could aid analysis of the impact of such acts on student learning, family support, school culture, and school policy and practice.

Teachers did not report these efforts being enacted easily or ending up cost-free. In some cases they recalled strategies and approaches from their credential program to meet needs of ELLs, but nonetheless reported complexities of using these in practice with multiple classes and many students (in the case of high school teachers) and in contexts not always supportive of or well resourced for ELLs. There also were reports of exhaustion from challenges, and of impediments to advocating, including professional risks. (Issues of confrontations with other educators and professional risk are examined in Athanases & de Oliveira, in press-b.) Nonetheless, teachers' narratives reported in focus groups were rich in reports of advocacy for ELLs. We need to know realistic possibilities of being change agents in schools (Banks, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), of new teachers enacting social-justice practices that may be rooted in teacher preparation (Quartz and the TEP Research Group, 2003). In the case of ELLs in our schools, clearly many learning challenges and inequities persist, some of which call for advocacy. This study helps document teachers' reports of the possibilities of such advocacy for ELLs and how such advocacy can be pursued.

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