LETTERS

Dear Editor:

The October 1978 issue of *Educational Leadership* [p. 44] attributes a letter written by me, but places me at Brooklyn College. I have never taught at Brooklyn College, and the university at which I am now teaching is the University of Pittsburgh.

Morris L. Cogan
Professor of Education
Curriculum and Supervision
University of Pittsburgh

Our sincere apologies—the editors.

Dear Editor:

In your May 1978 issue of *Educational Leadership* magazine, I was most happy to read the excellent article by Claude Mayberry entitled "Teacher Competence in the Urban School" [pp. 640-43].

After having spent 13 years in urban schools, I would like to say that Mayberry has made a valid and most worthwhile list of needed teacher-competencies for the urban schools. Also, I would like to add the following factors to his list of teacher-quality traits. These factors could further enhance a teacher's understanding of the culture of her/his students as well as aid us in becoming more *sensitive* to the needs, tensions, and disadvantages experienced by our students and their families:

- Living in the community/neighborhood in which we teach and thus knowing our students and parents as neighbors;
- Participation in these community, church-related, and neighborhood events; and
- Understanding the political factors of a local area that affect a school, either positively or negatively.

Perhaps these factors, added to Claude Mayberry's criteria, might bring about greater and continuing growth of individual teachers. Having lived in the community in which I have been teaching has provided me with insights I would otherwise have missed.

Sister Kennan Kudlacz, OP
Principal—St. Brendan School
Chicago

Dear Editor:

Last year I agreed to speak at the Michigan Academy of Arts and Sciences Education Panel on editor's language. I culled many of my examples of poor practice from earlier editions of *Educational Leadership*.

I see you are interested in clear language. I shall be watching to see how effective you are.

William E. Hoth
Professor of Education
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

Dear Editor:

In your March 1978 issue of *Educational Leadership* [Gloria W. Grant. "Values/Diversity in Education: A Progress Report." pp. 443-48.], I was happy to see some assessment presented as to the progress that has been made *vis-a-vis* values and diversity in the U.S. schools.

As Gloria Grant points out so well, much more needs to be done in the areas of materials and books, but I think that teachers, on their own, can develop a culturally diverse curriculum if they would only take the time out to think about it and then do it. Too many human and material resources have been wasted in the past. As in the Grant and Melnick three-stage Model of Education That Is Multicultural, I believe that we have passed the first two stages of awareness and

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but often the meaning is changed because of the different cultural perspective.[13]

5. *Standard English.* The almost exclusive use of standard English in our nation's schools is a blatant example of mainstream orientation. We are not debating whether or not we accept the position that all school children should develop enough skill in standard English to make its use a functional option. We are examining the cultural conflict many children experience in schools that ignore or repress the language they have lived with since birth. According to Benitez:

> All the pre-primers available on the market assume a level of development in oral languages that the Mexican American child has not reached at the beginning of first grade. Phonologically speaking he neither hears nor discriminates certain sounds. Accustomed as he is to hearing Spanish mostly at home, he hears Spanish in the classroom instead of English and tries to decode accordingly. The result is frustration and awareness that he is failing at something [while] the other children are succeeding.[14]

The truth of Benitez's remarks is usually accepted when referring to Latino, native American, and Asian American children—children whose first language is not English. Rarely, however, is it recognized that standard English may create similar learning problems for black children.

A group of elementary teachers in a rural school in central Florida noted that, as early as first grade, they could see white students moving ahead of blacks in reading. Until they listened to tapes of the black students speaking, they were oblivious to the distinct black dialect. They then realized that asking these children to learn to read available materials was like asking whites to begin reading Old English.

Teaching others as they would be taught becomes more difficult to achieve when teachers and students have alternative world views. It's a challenge to find out "how learners would be taught" when we don't understand their language, when we misinterpret their behavior, when our "tried and true" methods of diagnosing and motivating don't work. It is imperative that we meet this challenge once we identify the potential dropouts, failures, and nonachievers.

There is no evidence that Puerto Rican, black, native American, or Mexican American children are inferior in their abilities to learn. There is evidence, however, that the cultural orientation of these children differs from that which predominates in schools. To date, most of our schools remain monocultural despite the fact that we live in a polycultural society.

As we examine classes like those taught by Warren Benson, and as we try to help students like Kevin and Marcia, we must allow for conflicting world views. We can become sensitive to the modes of participation and communication preferred by some students, and we can note whether the teacher is providing for these preferences. This is part of what is involved in teaching others as they would be taught.

[13] Roger D. Abrahams and Geneva Gay. "Talking Black in the Classroom." In: Roger D. Abrahams and Rudolph C. Troike, editors. *Language and Cultural Diversity in American Education.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

[14] Mario Benitez. "A Blueprint for the Education of the Mexican American." ERIC ED 076294, March 1973, p. 7.



Christine Bennett is Assistant Professor, Indiana University, Bloomington.

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acceptance, and must now move to the third stage of affirmation. If we are ever to reflect the pluralistic society in which we live in our daily curriculum, this must be done.

I hope that the grades given to our schools by Grant will improve in the not so far away future. It really was a disgrace.

Carole M. Joseph
Instructor
The City College of
The City University of New York

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