Contemporary National Cultural Identity in Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin American Educators Workshop
Saturday June 17, 2018

Funds of Knowledge
(González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005)

- Refer to the experiences, histories, knowledge, languages/dialects, and worldviews of students and their families.
- Funds of knowledge include:
  - The socio-political and economic histories and contexts of students’ home countries and the relationships between those countries and the United States, and
  - The social and labor histories of households.

Transformative Potential of Funds of Knowledge

- Classroom practices sometimes underestimate or limit what children are able to display intellectually.
- Families have abundant knowledge that schools and teachers can learn from and use to:
  - Make instruction relevant, and
  - Improve family-engagement efforts.
- Students bring funds of knowledge from their homes and communities that can be used for concept and skill development.
Funds of Knowledge in the Classroom

- In viewing households as repositories of funds of knowledge, teachers:
  - Begin to view culture as a dynamic process rather than a static end state,
  - Recognize that culturally and linguistically diverse and/or working-class minority households contain worthwhile knowledge and experiences, and
  - Are better able to tie the academic content to the formerly hidden talents, experiences, and abilities they have discovered in their minority students.

Identifying Funds of Knowledge

- There are may practical ways to begin learning about students’ cultures and funds of knowledge (in addition to web-based research):
  - Conduct home visits,
  - Give writing prompts that elicit student knowledge,
  - Have students create photo essays of life in their homes/families,
  - Have students create identity collages,
  - Interview students and families,
  - Invite guest speakers from various linguistic communities to share traditions, celebrations, or slices of daily life, or
  - Attend public events in your students’ communities.

Example: Using Funds of Knowledge to Create a Literacy Lesson

- From Levoland Elementary School of Albuquerque Public Schools
- 3rd Grade Classroom
- Funds of knowledge identified: medicinal knowledge, gardening, ranching, urban skills, translating, culinary arts, and child care and child development
- Teacher began with a quick write about what students knew about medicinal folk remedies.
- Students shared “living knowledge” acquired from their families and communities:
  - “My grandma would put a cool rag. She would give us soup and we would take a hot bath and we would rest and then we would feel better.”
- Class discussed shared information to expand learning.
- Teacher supplemented shared knowledge as needed and engaged class in more in-depth writing to promote developing literacy skills.
- Students ended by publishing their information in a class publication: “Book of Medicinal Folk Remedies.”
Funds of Knowledge: Learning from Language Minority Households

- Read the bulletin titled Funds of Knowledge: Learning from Language Minority Households published through the Center for Applied Linguistics.

Discussion Questions:
- What are the important take-aways of this article?
- How could you go about identifying your students’ and their families’ existing funds of knowledge?
- How could you build on this knowledge in your instruction or interactions with students?

Identifying and Discussing Our Own Funds of Knowledge

- Consider funds of knowledge in your own life.
- Fill in the funds of knowledge table based on your own experience. Skip categories that don’t apply or add new categories based on your culture.
- In small groups, share aspects that you feel comfortable discussing. Consider:
  - What similarities are there among the FoK shared in the group?
  - How might you gather FoK of students and families in your classroom?
  - What are some ways you might use the FoK of students and families to inform teaching and/or programming (e.g., approaches to family engagement, curriculum development, instructional practices)?

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### Funds of Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funds of Knowledge</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Examples for Your Own Life</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home Language(s)</td>
<td>Spanish, Arabic, Italian</td>
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<td>Family Holiday Traditions</td>
<td>Holiday celebrations, New Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coping with Baby</td>
<td>Holding a baby, giving a baby position</td>
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<td>Friends &amp; Family</td>
<td>Visiting grandma, sports outings</td>
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<td>Family Values/Traditions</td>
<td>Shopping, meals, history</td>
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<td>Household Chores</td>
<td>Sweeping, doing dishes</td>
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<td>Educational Activities</td>
<td>Going to the museum, taking a walk in the neighborhood</td>
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<td>Favorite TV Shows</td>
<td>Science Channel, Bill Nye the Science Guy</td>
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<td>Family Occupations</td>
<td>Office, construction, police</td>
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<td>Scientific Knowledge/Practices</td>
<td>Recycling, swimming</td>
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<td>Additional F0K</td>
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Adopted from González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) and the NCCLR Education Development Center.
What does this mean for teaching?

- Aspects of students' and their families' cultural identities and values that we see are only a small part of their overall identities.
- Students' cultural, linguistic, and familial backgrounds affect who they are and what they bring to the classroom.
- Exploring and understanding students' histories and backgrounds can help us more effectively involve them in their own learning and in the classroom community.
- Learning about students' and families' funds of knowledge can help make instruction and learning more relevant.