Handbook of Social Justice in Education

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31 The 5 E's of Emancipatory Pedagogy
The Rehumanizing Approach to Teaching and Learning with Inner-City Youth

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Framing the Problem: The Dehumanization of Teaching and Learning

Many people, especially parents, see schools as the grand equalizer to inequality, yet the reality is that the institution of schooling has contributed to social stratification. Public education is in a state of crisis, particularly the education system in poor communities that are permeated by racism, poverty, violence, and oppression. In many urban centers, like the South Los Angeles elementary school where I teach, schools respond to the societal and community issues with dehumanizing control mechanisms aimed at both students and teachers. These mechanisms of control include, but are not limited to, school uniforms, zero tolerance discipline policies, scripted curriculum programs, and excessive emphasis on standardized testing. All these forms of school control are done in the vain pursuit of academic achievement on standardized tests on which schools like mine have historically failed. In turn, many administrators and teachers end up using student performance on tests to discuss student potential and to develop strategic plans with the primary goal of making the greatest numerical gains on the next set of tests.

The dehumanizing elements of our current education system have a ripple effect on teachers and students. Teachers become disenchanted with teaching and struggle to maneuver through the bureaucracies of teaching. Students begin to resist explicitly by disobeying and challenging school employees, as well as implicitly by disengaging and not caring about school (Freire, 2003; Giroux, 2001; Means & Knapp, 1991). As an educator I cannot overlook these conditions and their impacts. Understanding the realities of teaching in this day and age, through readings, critically analyzing historical trends, and more importantly, through my experiences with urban education as a student myself and now as a teacher, I am intentional about approaching my profession in a way that is often at odds with the current norms of the institution of school.

To respond to the dehumanizing conditions in urban schools and communities, I have committed myself to develop pedagogical practices aimed at preparing students to change those conditions. These kinds of students will emerge from our classrooms only if we are willing to develop emancipatory educational programs that use counterhegemonic pedagogies. In an attempt to describe my efforts at developing this sort of practice, this chapter will describe core elements of my educational philosophy, provide examples of those elements in my practice, and narrate the impact this approach has had on the achievement and critical consciousness of my students.

The Five E's in Emancipatory Education

The success I have experienced in the classroom can be largely attributed to my efforts to develop a humanizing pedagogy, one which values caring for students and the pursuit of
social change. This pedagogy has always been guided by my experience as an immigrant urban youth of color that grew up participating in many aspects of urban youth culture (hip hop, graffiti art, and video games). It has also been deeply influenced by critical educational theories and my own notions of social justice. To describe the approach that has resulted from these various influences, I created the “5 E’s of Emancipatory Education”: engage, educate (enable), experience (through exposure), empower (through knowledge of self), and enact. These five concepts guide my teaching, curriculum design, and community building. Everything I do as a teacher, inside and outside of the classroom, naturally encompasses them.

Engage: Building Trust, Respect, and Buy-In with Students, Families, and Communities

Engagement is a crucial component in building trust, respect and “buy-in” with students and families. In order for engagement to occur, I recognize that I must truly know the realities faced by my students, their families, and their communities. Although I am committed to engaging each of the aforementioned groups, the limits of this chapter will only permit me to focus on my use of strategies that incorporate youth culture and critical media literacy to engage students. By utilizing youth culture, students are often positioned as content experts and I am repositioned as a learner. When used effectively, this can help balance the power structure in the classroom.

Youth culture and media are powerful tools of engagement because there is a “pervasiveness of media in the lives of urban youth” (Duncan-Andrade, 2004). Cornel West (2004) argues that media provides young people with “distractive amusement and saturates them with pleasurable sedatives that steer them away from engagement with issues of peace and justice...[and] also leaves them ill equipped to deal with the spiritual malnutrition that awaits them after their endless pursuit of pleasure” (pp. 174-175). While many of my colleagues might use a popular cartoon character in a mathematical word problem, or have students write stories using youth culture centered topics, I try to use popular culture to develop critical thinking in addition to traditional academic skills. This development of critical skills helps students deconstruct the desensitization and apathy, while not devaluing their engagement in the media.

Regardless of how we might feel as educators about youth culture, we must realize that young people are heavily invested and influenced by it. Oftentimes what students are learning in the media is in direct conflict with the lessons they receive in school, which can lead to internal and external conflicts with teachers and the curriculum. We can mitigate these conflicts, and even capitalize on them, when we use the media in our classrooms to help students make sense of the sensory stimuli with which they are bombarded. As Morrell (2004) states, teachers must invest themselves in an understanding of youth culture through the eyes of the students they represent:

[It is important to attempt to understand why certain elements of popular culture, such as films, television shows, songs, or magazines might be appealing to young people. The voyage of understanding and empathizing with students enough to make sense of their interests and out-of-school literacy practices will demand that teachers exit their comfort zone and see, as much as possible, through the eyes of the students. (p. 118)
Creating culturally responsive curriculum (Gay, 2000) through the use of youth culture (Duncan-Andrade, 2004; Morrell, 2004) is a central element of my classroom efforts to engage students toward a journey of critical intellectualism and action.

**Educate: Developing Academic and Critical Competencies**

The buy-in that results from engaging curriculum encourages active participation from both the student and the teacher. This participation is critically important for the development of academic and critical competencies, which ultimately allow students to become self-sufficient in their endeavors. To increase personal and academic self-sufficiency in students, educators must develop two sets of skills in students: (1) the foundational skills for academic competencies, and (2) the critical skills that allow students to analyze society and what they can do to make it more democratic and socially just.

In my first year of teaching I naïvely believed that as long as my students were critically aware of social issues, then the foundational academic skills would fall into place. As an example, when I first taught writing I focused so much on valuing student voice that I neglected to effectively teach writing structures and conventions. So, although my students were able to identify and write about their experiences with injustice, they were not equipped with the foundational writing skills that would allow them to truly convey their messages. I came to realize that it was not good enough for me to see the brilliance of my students when others would not see it because they lacked the basic skills I was supposed to be teaching them. My students had to become solid academically and critically in order to create changes for themselves and for others.

I learned from my mistakes and spent my second year focusing on using writing as a tool to become an effective communicator. We talked about how frustrating it was when others did not understand us and consequently misinterpreted our message when we spoke. We transferred those experiences to how we wrote. Writing became a way to express truth, instead of an assignment for a grade. The standard curriculum provided the frameworks for developing basic writing skills and genres (expository, persuasive, and narrative). In order to avoid overcompensating on writing conventions at the expense of engagement and critical thinking, I often modified the writing prompt provided by the mandated curriculum. These modifications allowed students to write on things that were meaningful to them, like a letter to the principal making suggestions for changes in the school. As another example, I replaced the standard research project on astronomy, with a research project on marginalized people of color who have impacted communities similar to those of my students. Those biographies and lessons about struggle and resistance were then reaffirmed by providing students with firsthand experiences at demonstrations and rallies for issues of justice in the community.

Education has to be about merging the foundational academic skills that allow students to be self-sufficient with critical thinking and problem solving skills. Freire (2003) states that “[t]o surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (p. 47). In order for that to occur, the students must be equipped with the critical skills to identify oppression and its causes and have access to the institutional skills to create the “new situation” he references. I am not ashamed to admit that it took some time to learn the importance of combining these two skill sets. That growth, much like the growth that happens with students, came through experience, mistakes, self-reflection, and a commitment to getting better every day.
Experience: From Exposure to Lived Experience

People that are victimized by oppressive conditions can end up perpetuating those conditions because they have not been able to conceptualize a different model. To counter this, my teaching exposes students to different models of social possibility that exist beyond the classroom, school, and local community. Many teachers do this by scheduling a field trip to a university or by promoting college as the ultimate option for individual liberation. The problem with this as the model for social change is that it can lead students to believe that success lies exclusively outside of their neighborhood. Fanon (2004) refers to this as the paradigm of the “colonized intellectual,” and cautions that this person will likely “forget the very purpose of the struggle—the defeat of colonialism” (p. 13).

Exposure to college and other mainstream opportunities can be a great tool for opening doors for students that are traditionally denied access to those options. However, simply exposing students to possibilities falls short of helping students develop into people who will take up the challenge of creating social change. To develop students that will challenge the status quo, critical educators must also go beyond reading, talking, and learning about the protests and demonstrations of the Civil Rights era (which falls in line with simple exposure). Students must also have the opportunity to act on what they learn by engaging in social action, which might include participating in social actions that promote peace, police accountability, immigrant rights, workers’ rights, or educational justice. This helps to connect past struggles they learn about in class with the current issues, allowing them to understand the systemic elements that have allowed conditions of injustice to persist throughout history.

I will not tell my students what battles to take up, but I will use my position to expose them to the historical and present-day structures that have led to conditions of inequality. Indeed, Freire (2003) argues that the struggle for liberation among the oppressed cannot happen without this awareness:

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. (p. 47)

My students are not too young to experience injustice, poverty, violence, inequity, and hardship, yet they lack the words, tools, and experience with taking action to know how to respond to those oppressive conditions. Therefore, a major part of my pedagogy is a commitment to exposing students to ideas and methods for social action, despite their young age, so that they can contemplate more constructive ways to direct the angst which comes from their experiences growing up in South Los Angeles.

As their teacher, my role is “to help students learn how to problem- pose or ‘problematize’ their reality, in order to critique it and discover new ways to both individually and collectively work to change their world” (Darder, 2002, p. 33). I can also play the role of “institutional agent” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997) helping my students navigate through the system, exposing them to various forms of cultural capital, social networks, and outlets for their thoughts and actions. By experiencing these various possibilities students start to realize that there are numerous ways to channel themselves toward hope and change.

The opportunity to act on a developing critical consciousness is imperative for the creation and maintenance of hope among students. Whether through their spoken words, writing, organizing community events, or just entering spaces with people to dialogue, students must come to realize their importance and power as youth. Giroix (2001) argues
for the development of this consciousness in adults, and I have extended this same sensibility to much younger people:

[T]he task of radical educators must be organized around establishing the ideological and material conditions that would enable men and women from oppressed classes to claim their own voices. This would enable the development of a critical discourse of the wider society. (p. 116)

Through the development of academic and critical skills students develop the capacity to name, contextualize, analyze, and act upon their oppression. As this realization of the problems and of their potential agency develops, the students become more transformative in their intellectualism. They become empowered with a set of skills that allow them to navigate within the current system knowing that they are trying to get into a position to change it.

**Empowerment of Self: Knowing That There Is Hope**

To develop students’ knowledge of self and sense of self-worth, my pedagogy focuses heavily on communicating to my students that they are genuinely accepted and cared for in our class. It is for students living through the oppressive conditions in urban centers to hate themselves and their dispositions. Recently, I had a student that would regularly break down in class saying that she hated her life and herself. She would constantly ask out loud why life was so tough on her. As the year progressed, she learned that she was not alone in those thoughts and that there were actual societal forces causing her to feel those frustrations. This awareness that her suffering was not her own fault led her to change her self-conception, as well as her feelings about her family and community. She came to the realization that she could be active in her community, supporting causes that would directly impact the conditions that frustrated her. She became particularly adept at utilizing her literacy skills to express herself through poetry, and through that medium she also learned to express the love she had for her family, home, community, and more importantly, herself. Ultimately, her budding knowledge of self has motivated her to become active in community organizing and artistic creations that positively influence the community. In the end, success as an urban educator is heavily dependent on one’s ability to help students realize their worth and potential agency. Fanon (2004) suggests that when oppressed peoples develop a strong sense of self, “they discover their humanity, they begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory” (p. 8). Once they make that discovery they are ready for emancipatory action.

**Exact: What Are You Going to Do About It?**

Ultimately, the goal is to have students use the critical academic skills that they develop in the classroom to create change outside of the classroom. Without action the cycle of inequity and injustice continues. Freire (2003) argues that oppressed people, like my students and their families, “will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it” (p. 45). Freire’s argument is that liberation will come from the people who are oppressed, which suggests that as an educator of oppressed people my pedagogy and practice should be preparation to participate in that struggle for freedom. Part of my responsibility in that endeavor is to provide opportunities for students to realize, through participation, the possibility that
their efforts can change the circumstances in which they live. By taking part in opportunities to use the skills we have developed in class to participate in action for social change, students become increasingly aware of their potential to use their education to positively impact the community. These grounded experiences with direct action do not always have to equate to front-line community organizing and action. More subtle ways students can enact their critical sensibilities can come from them shifting from consumers of knowledge to producers of knowledge. For example, one of our final class projects requires students to create their own documentaries. In this act, the students become producers by utilizing their skills to create share narratives that are often not heard. In addition to these kinds of production activities, students are given opportunities to organize a variety of direct actions for social justice. It is these actions, ones that my students directly control, that are the most worthwhile. These include petitions, letter writing, and demonstrations in support of issues that they feel need to be addressed. A number of my students have also participated in rallies and used the media to show solidarity and support for issues that directly affect them and their communities.

Maneuvering Through the Madness: The 5 E’s in a Mandated Scripted Curriculum

The mandates of a scripted curriculum can make it seem difficult to implement pedagogy that deviates from district standards. It is possible to implement this type of pedagogy, but it requires determination, planning, and the courage to try (Friere, 1998). The key is to find the crossover between one's expectations as a social justice educator and the expectations of the district or the state. District and state mandates tend to be broad and interpretable, which makes some room for social justice pedagogy. In my case, I weave in “what I have to do” with “what I know is the right thing to do.” This allows my students to be successful in traditional ways, but also as social justice scholars.

To demonstrate how I balance these sometimes competing agendas, the following section outlines an Open Court unit that meets both sets of standards (state and social justice). Open Court is a district mandated, scripted reading program broken into six-week units. The success of the program is measured by mandatory district assessments at the end of each unit. In 5th grade, the theme for the third unit is “Heritage.” The stories in the unit revolve around cultures and traditions that are mostly foreign to my students. Over the course of the unit, students are expected to create a “Heritage” album/scrapbook and produce a written narrative about a tradition in their family. Taking those expectations, as well as the state required literacy standards, I modify the unit to the following projects:

- a poetry unit
- a cultural zine
- biographies on people of color that positively influenced/affected communities of color
- ethnographic documentaries
- the first stages of a community research project (see appendix 1).

The five E’s of emancipatory pedagogy are present in the projects and activities outlined throughout the unit. Students become engaged in various ways, including through popular media, technology, and other culturally engaging materials. These materials are used to develop academic, critical, and technological competencies as students go
through various processes to complete the projects that range from writing samples to the creation of a video on DVD. The unit concludes with formal presentations from students, which gives them a chance to showcase what they have learned and teach others. The presentations and multimedia products provide a critical investigation of the historical conditions people of color have faced and the heritage of resistance and activism that are part of those histories. These outcomes are supported, at least tacitly, from my administration because this approach produces some of the best test scores in the school. This is an important point to make because many teachers committed to social justice feel that they must choose between pursuing traditional measures of success and social justice pedagogy. My experience suggests that we can do both.

Outcomes: Measuring Your Effectiveness

In both the language arts and math sections of the California Standards Test (CST), my students consistently meet or exceed state averages (see appendix 2 for recent examples). Across the board, my students’ averages were above the local district’s averages. Due to the fact that achievement is so low in our local district, our administration developed a protocol where they asked teachers to create and track strategies for increasing the test scores of select students throughout the year. This process began in the first few days of the school year, before the students returned, by having our entire teaching staff examine test scores from the previous year. We were trained how to select a few students who were in a “strategic range” that would allow us to move them up quickly and gain the most points on their test scores. The process required teachers to submit names of the students so that progress could be monitored by the principal and the district director.

This approach to raising a school’s test scores is not a phenomenon isolated to my school. In fact, it is an approach used throughout the city of Los Angeles to demonstrate that schools serving poor children are getting “better.” What it actually demonstrates is the dehumanization of students and teachers. Nevertheless, this is the system that teachers have to confront. One way we can confront these conditions is to understand that test score gains are not mutually exclusive of social justice pedagogy. In an effort to show that this is possible, I have also included the state test scores for the target students in my class this past year (see Table 31.1).

It is important to understand that this sampling is based on a criterion set by my school and district. According to district policies, I am a successful teacher because most of my students experienced similar gains. At some level, it is this level of success on standardized measures that has allowed me to continue to operate with relative flexibility in my pedagogy and curriculum. This is an important point to make in our discussions of what

| Table 31.1 Sampling of Target Students CST Test Scores Before and During My Class |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Student | Language arts | Math |                              |
|         | Before | During | Before | During |                              |
| V.R.    | 320B   | 386P   | 394P   | 476A   |                              |
| D.A.    | 374P   | 390A   | 386P   | 557A   |                              |
| M.C.    | 239FBB | 319B   | 264BB  | 294BB  |                              |

A = Advanced; FBB = Far Below Basic; BB = Below Basic; B = Basic; P = Proficient

*This sampling shows academic growth over time, but more importantly, doing so by implementing an Emancipatory Pedagogy and developing critical thinking and action skills.
it means to be a social justice educator. We can be critical of the excessive focus on testing, but we must also realize that our students can perform on those tests. The testing craze certainly reduces some of our freedom as educators, but it should not preclude us from developing pedagogical strategies that incorporate elements of critical thinking and social justice. We can raise test scores without seeing students as numbers on a statistical sheet.

It is important to point out that I do not use test scores as the sole measure of my effectiveness or my students’ progress. To illustrate some of the other measures I use, I will share a brief story about Gero, who struggled to complete the work assigned in my class. He would take inordinate amounts of time in everything he did, oftentimes holding back the rest of the class an extra 30 to 60 minutes during our assessment periods. Regardless of what the assignment was, how challenging or easy, he would not be successful at completing it.

Gero was particularly opposed to writing, until we got to our poetry unit, and then something clicked. He had finally found a form of literacy where he felt he could express himself. When we got to our next district mandated writing assessment, one where students were responsible for writing a persuasive essay on slavery, I saw a breakthrough for him. I told the class that they were allowed to choose their own persuasive topic (war, community issues, immigration issues, etc.) as long as it followed the guidelines for a persuasive essay. Fifteen minutes after giving the assessment, Gero dropped a sheet of paper down on my desk. After I asked him what he put on my desk, he responded that he had placed his “prewrite” there and that he was now ready to write the “real” essay. As he went back to his seat I began to read this prewrite only to discover a lengthy and complex poem on immigration. The following is the poem he wrote:

*Immigration Issues by Gero*

Now I know that there’s a lot of people in the United States and a lot of those people are the ones that hate being mistreated and a lot of those people are being looked at with disgrace and a lot of those people are being spit in their face it’s a hard case of misjudgement

Get to know us before you get to throw us out
Now how the [heck] are you going to say this is your land
I demand that you do the research and know that we were here first
And you came to us with thirst
Of land so we gave you a hand and you bit it
Now do you get it
This was our land till the Spaniards came and stole it
And then they sold it
to you and you already knew that we were here
But your people didn’t care they just wanted us out so they threw us out
Anywhere

But we came back crossing a lot of struggles and tossing our selves over the border in order to have a better life and we came with a dream and back then it used to seem that that dream was unreachable
some immigrants were able to accomplish their dream even in
the toughest times when it seemed that they couldn’t
They wouldn’t give up
They didn’t give a [crap]
They wouldn’t stop they would keep going and take the lead
and that’s how we all succeed when we’re in need
So when you’re in need don’t give up
Don’t give a [crap]
Just keep going and you’ll be showing the whole world
that you can and then they’ll understand to treat us better
whenever they see us
Maybe one little kid will want to be us
Now do the research and know that we were here first
and you came to us with thirst
of land and we gave you a hand and you bit it
Now do you get it?

Gero’s growth was not immediately quantifiable on state test scores. What I learned
from him was that the use of an emancipatory pedagogy does not always yield immediate
results. Sometimes it takes time for young people to find their voice in such a way that
they feel they can use the concepts that we are learning in the class. What is different
about an emancipatory pedagogy and a test-driven pedagogy is that the former does not
give up on students. It is a persistent pedagogy that aims to strike a balance between chal-
lenging and supporting students until they find the room to express their thoughts and
ideas. When Gero finally found his voice, he also found the confidence to tackle other
forms of writing like the persuasive essay, on which he eventually did quite well. Gero
has continued writing poetry and now enjoys performing his pieces at conferences and
for community organizations.

Longitudinal Impacts: The Watts Youth Collective

Perhaps the most significant outcome of an emancipatory pedagogy is the longstanding
relationships that develop between students and myself, and between the students them-
selves. As one example, some of my former students created an organization called the
Watts Youth Collective (WYC). It started when several of my former students became
involved in community organizations around Los Angeles after leaving my class. When
those organizations started moving in directions that did not include the interests of my
students, they decided to create their own organization. They formed the WYC, a collec-
tive of youth who would meet in the homes of the various members to work on projects
that would positively affect their community.

Of primary concern to them has been the growing tension between “Black and Brown”
community members. As a response, they created documentaries to dispel the stereotypes
that plague their community, challenging viewers to get to know their neighborhood
before passing judgment or being influenced by the media’s interpretation of their com-

munity. They have also challenged themselves to educate each other by confronting their
own personal issues and prejudices. As a supporter, I aided by setting up workshops on
racism, college access, and provided the resources to conduct their projects (video cam-
eras, editing assistance, transportation, etc). As an educator, I cannot take credit for these
transformative behaviors, but I can see the lessons that we shared in class are developing
and spreading from my former students to other young people in the community. The
following poem from Jojo suggests that the pedagogy he experienced in our fifth grade class shaped his current commitments to the WYC and social change in the community:

5th grade...the grade where my eyes were opened
where I got to see the real history of Watts
the real history of America
where I have learned to fight
for freedom, justice, and my rights...
...I believe we can solve anything
so let's unite as we have
united in our Watts Youth Collective
and to know you can make change...in unity is a feeling of
POWER...JUSTICE... FREEDOM...and LIBERATION.

These shifts in consciousness should not be held as separate objectives from traditional academic achievement because they are the precursors for social change in the community.

Another outcome of the WYC has been the development of a mentorship model, where students return to my classroom each year to act as mentors to my current students. This continues the cycle of community building as my current students get to hear stories and get advice from my former students. These mentoring relationships reinforce the importance of the things being taught in the class, and reassure my current students that our relationship will extend well beyond this one year of their schooling. For my former students, this mentorship model allows them to feel that they have a safe space to continue learning, building, and organizing. Since its inception in 2004, the WYC has gone from six members to its current membership of 30 students, ranging in age from 7th to 12th grade.

Parting Thoughts

My story is not unique. I have seen and heard about effective urban teachers from all over the nation, from a variety of backgrounds (single parents, people with families, teachers not from the “hood”). These counternarratives are important stories of success that occur in spite of the repressiveness of the conditions in urban schools. We must continue to share these stories because they offer a glimpse of hope for a better educational system and world. We must also be careful about how we tell these stories because successful teachers in urban schools are often looked upon as exceptional, something that cannot become the norm. It is my hope that by sharing stories of our pedagogy and its impact, that others will be inspired to generate their own counternarratives. Such a series of counternarratives can help us connect to one another, while also building momentum for changing the perspectives of our colleagues in this effort to achieve educational justice. The challenge for an emancipatory education for all children is arduous, but through critical hope and continually challenging ourselves to do better, we can find the fortitude to stay the course.

References

Duncan-Andrade, J. (2004). Your best friend or your worst enemy: Youth popular culture, peda-
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Appendix 3.1

The following is a chart that shows the activities we conduct in our class and the description of those activities during our Open Court Unit 3: Heritage section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biography of a Person of Color positively affected</td>
<td>This research project challenged students to look at an overshadowed and underrepresented person whose contributions created a positive legacy for others to follow. The students had to research using the internet and books, delving into very challenging expository texts. More importantly, they began to understand a broader sense of a true people's history, struggles of a people for a people, as well as connecting their legacies to their lives and current experiences. They are also supposed to connect the group work to those individuals. They become the expert and are responsible for teaching others (in the class and in the school) through their PowerPoint presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities of Color</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Unit</td>
<td>While we are learning about cultures, heritage, traditions, and legacies we get into poetry as an option to deliver their narratives in a different way. This expressive writing allows students to write about them, their families, community, and issues affecting them. It gives the students another way to give a voice to the voiceless. They analyze poetry (Tupac's &quot;The Rose that Grew from Concrete,&quot; Maya Angelou's &quot;I Rise&quot;, and Sandra Cisneros' &quot;House on Mango Street&quot;), learn to deconstruct the messages and the context that created these messages, and transform their learning by creating and performing their own poems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zines</td>
<td>The students learn about the power of images and design through this medium. They partake in a history of zines and show how some can be used to inspire and create change. They then work collaboratively to create a Community/Cultural Zine of their own on a topic of their choosing (some have done zines on cultural hairstyles, foods, games, etc...). This project allows the students to transcend consumer media like magazines by becoming producers of positive and community-oriented media.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
With the whole unit revolving around stories on culture and traditions, the students are required to produce a narrative. The students are responsible for taking that narrative beyond pencil and paper towards a more visual aspect. They conduct interviews of their families and share stories. They take those stories and create a 3-5 minute documentary that they learn to put together. Using basic video editing skills which I teach a few students who are responsible for teaching the rest of the class, the students make their crude videos and show them to the school and community. Some of the stories that they have captured revolve around coming to this country and the struggles their families have encountered.

During this unit, the students tie in Math by conducting a Community Research Project. As a class they generate a couple questions for which to conduct their research ("What are the problems that affect the community?" and "What are the problems that affect the school?"). Once they spend some time interviewing family, neighbors, and community members they bring back the data and design an action project to help address the results of their research. Their action project is carried through oftentimes resulting in a Community Action Night where they have presented their research findings and solutions to the community, created teatro/theatre skits, and written poetry to inform and influence the community. They have also used their research to present at places like UCLA.

**Appendix 31.2 California Standards Test (CST) ’06**

![Graph showing California Standards Test (CST) ’06: Language Arts Average](image-url)