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Student Culture and Classroom Assessment Practices

Tilia Giron

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STUDENT CULTURE AND CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Constructivism maintains that instruction is more meaningful when it is relevant, social and interactive. Formative assessment has been empirically demonstrated as being an effective form of instruction and assessment for learners (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b). Since assessment orients instruction and learning, combining student culture with formative assessment could result in a powerful approach to learning. This study explored what a sample of dual language teachers, primarily grades four and five, reported about their classroom assessments, culture and student learning. This study also inquired whether these teachers said they used formative assessment. The research question was: What do dual language elementary school teachers report that they do and how do they do what they report doing in order to incorporate student culture within their classroom assessment practices?

Participants reported that they accommodated student individuality within their own classroom assessment practices, which, as described, resemble actual formative

assessment. These teachers said they modified assessments for student differences despite a mandate to observe scripted curricula with strict fidelity.

Some teachers seemed pre-occupied with large scale testing. They disparaged the No Child Left Behind legislation for precipitating large-scale standards-based testing, heavy reliance on data, and incessant pressure to continually improve scores. Some also held in high disfavor district administrators whom they deemed responsible for reportedly requiring assessments in a language in which students had not been instructed; they, further, indicated they may have intervened on their students' behalf.

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Chapter 1

Literature Review

Assessment Landscape

Today's assessment climate is largely one of accountability and large-scale standardized testing. Pressure seems to compel teachers, schools and districts to focus on demonstrating improvement in student performance scores. Accordingly, they have implemented new programs and features associated with the No Child Left Behind legislation in 2001 to help them reach adequate yearly progress (AYP) and exhibit academic proficiency. At the same time, since the meta-analysis of Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b) empirically demonstrating formative assessment to have a significant effect size as an educational intervention, formative assessment has gained support as a form of instruction and assessment. And, in fact, that support seems to be growing. Countries, such as New Zealand and Portugal, as well as Great Britain, have launched sizable efforts to implement it. Locally, Brookhart (2011) has issued a set of standards of teacher competency to replace those of the 1990 Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students (AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990) largely because the 1990 standards do not address formative assessment.

What is formative assessment? The precise answer changes, but essentially it is the use of assessment results to enhance student learning by modifying instruction accordingly. Wiliam (2011, p. 14) says, "For assessment to support learning, it must provide guidance about the next steps in instruction and must be provided in [a] way that encourages the learner to direct energy toward growth, rather than well-being." It also is intended to involve the student in his own learning in an active way.

Tension exists between a push for standardized testing to demonstrate improved scores and a move toward improving learning for the individual learner through formative assessment (Elwood, 2006a). The emphasis on "high visibility" summative tests prevents more movement among and within schools to adopt formative assessment, she says. This tension exists at a time when learning has been recognized as occurring within a sociocultural environment (Shepard, 2000). Demonstrating support for this point of view is Hargreaves (2007), who claims that learning can only occur in the socio-cultural relationship between the learner and the teacher and not even within the student himself. Hargreaves (2007, p. 185) takes up the question of validity for formative assessment and frames it in terms of a social context. She claims that formative assessment has more validity if its "learning outcomes are socially appropriate for learners of the twenty-first century." Given her solid adherence to the socio-cultural context of learning, she has adopted the use of collaborative assessment for learning.

This, then, is the current learning and assessment environment: pressure at the state, district and school level for students to perform on large-scale tests and a growing base for formative assessment as enhancing student learning within the academic community amidst strong support (Shepard, 2000; Hargreaves, 2007; and Elwood, 2006a) for the view that learning takes place within a socio-cultural context. Correspondingly, various approaches have been attempted in an effort to render learning and assessment more meaningful, tangible and accessible to students. Similarly, I wondered whether assessment could become more meaningful to students, especially culturally diverse students, if assessments were more culturally available. If so, then maybe student engagement and learning would increase. The literature review that follows found an effect for culture on learning, assessment and the formative assessment practices of feedback and questioning. In this study, I sought to learn whether student culture

was a factor that teachers conceptualized and, if so, how did they accommodate it on their classroom assessments. The research question this study explored was: What do dual language elementary school teachers report that they do and how do they do what they report doing in order to incorporate student culture within their classroom assessment practices?

Literature Review

The literature review is organized in three parts. Part one consists of definitions, an introduction and three focused literature reviews identifying the intersection of first, learning with assessment; second, culture with learning; and third, culture and assessment. Part one lays the foundation for part two, where available literature is reviewed to examine whether a relationship exists between the role of culture and three basic practices of formative assessment: questioning, feedback and self assessment – the fourth being the formative use of summative assessment, not addressed here as implications of context, such as culture, on summative assessment have been much discussed in the literature (e.g., Elwood, 2006b; Gipps, 1994). Part three explores based on the literature how student culture may be incorporated within formative assessment.

Definitions.

1. Diversity. Diversity in K-12 public education is frequently considered to include students of various racial identities, language groups, socio-economic classes, genders, exceptionalities and environments (Banks, J., 2004).
2. Culture. My definition of culture has changed since I began this study. Originally, I thought of it in terms of Banks, K. (2006) definition where the construct could be neatly compartmentalized and as, she says, organized into "individual components" that are "not fixed." It would be a "formula for living." But, now, I conceive of it as much more amorphous, messy and interactive.

Most constructions of culture include values, beliefs and behaviors and characterize it as organic, developmental and continually in process. I consider culture to include those and patterns of belief, communication, ways of thinking, symbols, tools, language, customs, art and possibly views of the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). But the "place" of culture extends beyond geographical settings (Ortner, 2000) and "communities" are now as much of "the mind" as they are of some concrete physical location. I see culture as being as much a product of the individual as of the context of the individual (Levinson, 2000; Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996) and interactive (Gonzalez, 2005). The essential difference in my prior and current definition is subtle, but amounts to a stronger perception of the individual/s as being able to act on and make a difference to the environment.

3. Student culture. Student culture is considered to be that set of interacting systems of cultures that a student has and is acquiring as he continually interacts with different experiences, environments, persons, and self. It is, therefore, fluid and organic despite tendencies in a direction that may arise from group/other affiliations. And while a student may share certain cultural properties with a group, whether familial, community, peer or ethnic, a student's culture is regarded as ultimately individual (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim & Heyman, 1996). And research indicates more difference exists within ethnic groups than among them (e.g., Garcia, E., 2004). In the classroom, it is the individual student's situation that matters (Cobb & Bowers, 1999) and fairness requires that the student's individual differences be accommodated (Cole & Zieky, 2001). Thus, in considering student culture and classroom assessment, the role of student culture is culture particular to the individual student.

4. Engagement. Engagement exists when a student is immersed in an activity or thought; it typically demonstrates as a high degree of on-task behavior in the classroom; it often precedes

learning and is typically a mediating variable between motivation and outcome in goal theory (Greene & Miller, 1996). Engagement is multidimensional with emotional, cognitive and operational factors (Munns & Woodward, 2006) as well as social relational ones (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

5. Classroom assessment. Classroom assessment refers to assessments that a classroom teacher and/or students construct; it is designed to enhance student learning, is aligned with curriculum objectives, has a distinct purpose, and is administered to students in the classroom as part of instruction. It is integral to the learning process. It intends to identify where the student is on his learning path and where the student needs to go to advance his learning further (e.g., Brookhart, 2005; Shepard, 2000; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005; Wiggins, 1989).

6. Classroom assessment practices. These refer to all the various aspects related to the assessment of learning, including its purpose, administration, tasks for the assessment, format, rubric for scoring, criteria for scoring, grading, instructions, administrator, seating arrangement, length of time in which to perform it; class/group review in preparation; and any use of the formative assessment practices of questioning, feedback with or without marking, peer and self-assessment and formative use of summative tests as well as test redo.

7. Formative assessment. Formative assessment and assessment for learning are used interchangeably to mean any assessment wherein the assessment results are used by teachers, learners or their peers to adapt instruction for the purpose of improving student learning (Wiliam, 2010). It typically involves the learner in a more active way. It also relies predominately on the use of feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) as well as, questioning, peer and self assessment and the formative use of summative assessment. Feedback is information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, or experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or

understanding (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback may be *the* critical feature within formative assessment, but *how* it is given and received is part of what determines its level of effectiveness: positive, negative or none (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Feedback *can* be effective because it ‘changes the locus of attention’ (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996, p. 275). Brookhart (2005) says feedback is critical because it breaks the negative effect of assessment, makes it possible to turn the negative into a positive, and shows how by identifying the gap which the student can now see. As a result of viewing the gap between actual and desired learning performance, the assessment outcome may no longer be regarded by the student as *final*; it may be conceived as *part* of the learning process.

Introduction

Cultural differences between the student and the classroom have been identified as one reason why culturally diverse (Irvine, 1990) and Latino students, in particular (Trueba & Bartolome, 1997), underperform academically. Irvine (1990, p. xvii) calls attention to the lack of cultural "synchronization" between African American students and their teachers, constituting cultural clashes and confrontations that ultimately result in student failure and drop out. Not only may culturally diverse students see instructional content as not relevant to them personally and after repeated failures may have learned to regard themselves as unsuccessful (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Stiggins, 2004, 2007) but also, for various reasons, many students continue to see themselves as socially outside the system (Munns & Woodward, 2006). Middleton & Toluk (1999) contend that the issue is not unmotivated students – that students are motivated to constantly assess whether to participate instructionally – but that many students are not motivated as educators would like.

The question arises as to how to generate increased student engagement in the classroom. If assessment drives instruction as argued (Biggs, 1996, 1998; Johnson & Kress, 2003), one way to change instruction may be to change assessment.

The form of assessment of concern here is classroom and, formative, assessment, in particular. Integrating features of student culture into classroom and formative assessment differs with standardized testing which focuses on uniform meaning and administration for all students (e.g., Earl, 2003) and with recent formative assessment research, which recognizes the importance of social, contextual and meaningful classroom interaction in its practices but has been focusing on implementing formative assessment practice with classroom teachers. This literature review suggests in direct contrast to the one-size-fits-all approach of standardized testing that culturally shaping formative assessment can lead to increased learning for culturally diverse students.

The cultural approach advocated is undergirded by one fundamental assumption: that a student and his culture are inseparable, and, consequently, a student will find aspects of his own culture meaningful, and, therefore, be more cognitively and emotionally engaged by them. This fundamental assumption is supported by the conceptual review of literature on culture and formative assessment that explores whether formative assessment has cultural implications for student learning; finding such, it suggests that consideration be given on how to integrate cultural aspects into formative assessment components in order to enhance student learning.

Part One: The Intersection of Learning, Culture and Assessment

Classroom Assessment and Learning.

Classroom assessment is arguably the most important influence in shaping student learning (Broadfoot, 1996b). At its heart lies social constructivism which views learning as

socially and cognitively constructed (Vygotsky, 1978) and holds to the beliefs that all students can learn (Shepard, 2000) and that assessments need to be fair or equitable to all students (e.g., Gipps & Murphy, 1994).

The connections between classroom assessment and learning have been well documented in several published reviews of literature (e.g., Brookhart, 2005; Crooks, 1988; Natriello, 1987). Brookhart (2005) concludes that classroom assessment, motivation and learning, whether as independent or dependent variables, consistently demonstrate a relationship. She characterizes the following as ‘incontrovertible:’ student involvement in their own assessment produces learning gains; certain assessment aspects are important if not crucial for effective formative assessment – including integrating instruction with assessment, clear criteria and feedback; teacher assessment beliefs affect assessment practices; and existence of a classroom assessment environment. Understanding formative classroom assessment is the "key" to raising student motivation and achievement (Brookhart, 2005).

Culture and Learning.

Literature supporting the effect of culture on learning seems boundless. Its influence cuts across disciplines: math (e.g., Cahnmann & Hornberger, 2000; Cobb, 1994; Cooper, 2004); science (e.g., Bardwell, 2005); writing (e.g., Kovazarina, 2006; Myhill, 2005); educational and/or psychological testing (e.g., Armour-Thomas & Gopaul-McNicol, 1997; Banks, K., 2006; Ponterotto, Gretchen & Chauhan, 2001); geographic locale (e.g., Koki, nd.; Lillemyr & Sobstad, 2006); cross-cultural work performance (e.g., Earley, Gibson & Chen, 1999; Earley & Stubblebine, 1989; Van de Vijver, 2002); and ethnicities (e.g., Demmert, 2005; Feng, 1994; Garcia, E., 2004; Helms, 1992; Koki, nd; Lomawaima, 2004; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Reyes, Scribner & Scribner, 1999; Trueba & Bartolome, 1997; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield &

Quiroz, 2001). Its effect is portrayed within education itself where a disciplinary field has developed around it – multicultural education (e.g., Banks, J., 1994, 1988, 2006; Banks, Cookson, Gay, Irvine, Nieto, Schofield & Stephan, 2001; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2004; Nieto, 1999, 2004).

Three examples illustrate the intersection of culture with learning. Newfield et al. (2003, p.61) reported the work of an English as a Second Language teacher of "disaffected Soweto youth" in South Africa, where the educational system was overhauled in an attempt to redress apartheid inequities and generated what appears to be a stiff outcomes-based structural system. The teacher expanded the modes of response to poetry available to his students, urban ghetto adolescents, for whom English was the language of the classroom but not of the streets. Through drawing, sculpting and writing their own stories, the students' interest, motivation, and participation in poetry, language and the classroom increased. In this first example, the effect of culture on learning is deliberate, overt, and positive.

In England, while observing a reception class of four-year-olds in a school located in 'the midst of a rather squalid inner-urban neighborhood,' Brooker (2005, p. 115) noticed that although the "Anglo" students settled right in to the play atmosphere of the classroom, Bangladeshi children had considerable difficulty adjusting to the classroom play expectations. That difficulty stemmed from a clash in family and cultural values between Bangladeshis' value of interdependence and their expectation that learning would occur through being quiet, still and listening and Anglos' and the school's values of independence, activity and initiative (Brooker, 2005, p. 123). Ultimately, the Bangladeshi children scored lower on assessments than the Anglo children, which appeared to lock them into a set academic path. The clash in cultural values not only generated (Brooker, 2005, p. 126) academic but potentially personal difficulties for

Bangladeshi students: "they had double the work to do on starting school: not just 'becoming a pupil' ... but becoming a different kind of child from the one their family and community had created." Here the effect of culture on learning is implicit and negative.

Sternberg (2006, p.30) designed a quasi experimental study where Alaskan Yu'pik Eskimo students in grades nine through twelve regarded by their teachers as 'slow learners' were taught the basics of area and perimeter using familiar native teachers and rectangular fish racks. Five other classes were taught the same content using standard curriculum and classroom textbooks. The experimental group outscored all other groups on all measures. Here Sternberg (2006) illustrates that when culture is integrated with instruction and assessment, students considered "slow learners" can become "top learners." Thus, he demonstrates the potential of culture integrated with assessment to significantly improve student learning.

Related to the intersection of culture and learning is the question of how culture affects cognitive processes about which there are differing views. Sternberg (1997, p. 1031) says that the content of learning and its expression can differ 'radically' among cultures, but cognitive processes may not vary. In contrast, Markus and Kitayama (1991) and Nisbett, Peng, Choie and Norenzayan (2001) both argue that process cannot be separated from content; and that content drives process. Markus and Kitayama (1991) and Nisbett et al. (2001) agree that Westerners perceive themselves individually and therefore reason analytically while East Asians perceive themselves interdependently and therefore reason holistically. Markus and Kitayama (1991) attribute the cause to different self construals, or views of the self, and Nisbett et al. (2001) to different types of social organization.

However, two other studies argue generally on behalf of intercultural cognitive processes. Yang, Zeng, Ju, Zhao, Guo, and Selmer (2005) claim that Chinese and American college

students reason in the same way. And Niu, Zhang and Yang (2006), also sampling Chinese and American college students, find deductive reasoning to be intercultural, but not creativity.

Culture and Assessment.

The penetrating influence of culture on assessment is reflected in standardized testing and efforts by test developers and others to achieve cultural comparability. The objective of intercultural assessment comparability combines with inquiry, concern, and approaches as how to improve upon it (e.g., Banks, K., 2006; Berry, 2001; Canino, Canino & Bravo, 1994; Canino & Guarnaccia, 1997; Dunn, Smith & Montoya, 2006; Flaherty, 1978; Goldstein, 1996; Hambleton & Patsula, 2000; Helms, 1992; Kornhaber, 2004; Padilla, 2001, 2004; Sedlacek & Kim, 1995; Stobart, 2005).

Two recent studies found that despite efforts to prevent it, culture seeps into the assessment process and can have a disadvantaging effect on ethnic groups (Banks, K., 2006; Helms-Lorenz, Van de Vijver & Poortinga, 2003). To test Spearman's hypothesis – that as cognitive complexity or difficulty on an assessment increases, so do performance differences among ethnic groups – meaning that students of nonEuropean American ancestry perform worse cognitively than students of European American ancestry – Helms-Lorenz et al. (2003) found that it was culture, not cognitive complexity, that had the biggest effect on performance.

In addition, they found statistical errors and culturally loaded features in instruments typically used to test Spearman's hypothesis – features that served to yield lower scores for ethnic students. The point is that despite what appeared to be sound psychometrics, assessments were structured in such a way as to disadvantage ethnic students; and, consequently what were accepted as cognitive or intellectual differences among ethnic groups were actually cultural ones.

In a separate study intended to present both an operational definition of culture and a related model for evaluating cultural bias in educational testing, Banks, K. (2006) examined Terra Nova scores among fifth grade reading and language arts students and found African American students to be attracted within their incorrect responses to items that carried a cultural relevance for them. Neither Hispanic nor European American students were similarly attracted to these options, thus once again indicating an effect for culture on assessment.

Significance of the Culture and Assessment Intersection.

While the intersection between culture and assessment appears well established in the literature, how to address that relationship is not. Two reasons exist for concern about the effect of culture on classroom assessment: one is student learning and the other is validity. According to the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (1999, p. 9), validity, “the degree that evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores by proposed uses of test,” is “the most fundamental consideration in developing and evaluating tests.” Validity constitutes the basis upon which assessments are constructed. With low degrees of validity, assessments hold little meaning and, therefore, little value for the assessor, the assessee or other recipient of that score. When assessments are constructed or administered in a manner that disadvantage any one person or group, the assessment score or its implication is not valid for that individual, group or user.

How can any student be expected to demonstrate classroom learning if the classroom assessment content and process is not clear or made clear to him? If indeed students learn through formative assessment, an empirically demonstrated effective learning approach (e.g., Black & Wiliam 1998a, 1998b; Black et al, 2003), then formative assessment must also address student culture.

The impact of student culture on learning and formative assessment is fundamental and goes to the heart of education. If at least one purpose of public education in the United States is to provide the instructional and social institutional structure by which students are organized to develop and demonstrate their cognitive, social and personal talents, then why not undergird that effort consistently with the means to facilitate that purpose and to maximize student learning, rather than possibly sabotage it? Those same developed collective students' talents are what this or any country will ultimately rely on in the often fiercely competitive international marketplace of industrialized capitalism. It would be wise to do everything possible to help maximize student learning. And, if the notion of all students being entitled to an equal opportunity for learning (e.g., Cole, N. & Zieky, 2001; Gee, 2003; Gipps & Murphy, 1994; Shepard, 2000) carries any significance beyond the phrase, then a moral obligation exists to move beyond rhetoric to full integration of culture within formative assessment.

That culture is pervasive and impacts validity is reflected in the proposal by Quintana, Chao, Cross, Jr., Hughes, Gall, Aboud, Contreras-Grau, Hudley, Liben & Vietze (2006) that all research incorporate cultural validity, defined as "the manner in which sociocultural processes are represented in the study" (p.1138). It includes factors, such as race, culture and social class, plus the researchers' conceptual foundation, hypotheses, recruitment of participants, instrumentation, procedures, data analyses, and interpretation of findings. They argue that all research takes place within culture – as does classroom assessment and learning, therefore, the need to acknowledge it. However, in classroom assessment research, either a lot of students are homogeneous or researchers do not report or identify student culture. Therefore, not only is it incumbent to acknowledge culture for the sake of validity on classroom assessments, but in research on classroom assessment as well.

Part Two: Culture and Formative Assessment

Culture and Feedback.

In formative assessment, culture intersects with learning and assessment as students and teachers engage in the practices of feedback, inquiry, self assessment and peer assessment.

Delivering effective feedback itself is not an easy task (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Moreover, there is the question of the recipient and the effect of culture upon his receipt of, interpretation of and action on that feedback, as well as the culture of the feedback provider interacting with the culture of the recipient. Little research directly examines the effect of student culture on feedback, but a few related studies indicate a mixed effect for culture on feedback. Considerable potential exists for research in this area.

DeLuque and Sommer (2000) conducted a literature review on feedback seeking in organizations and, consequently, developed a four-factor differentiated cultural framework (derived in part from Triandis, 1995). It may be applied in part to students – in part because there is a developmental factor to consider.

Based upon their review and propositions, students from a holistic (high context and nonlinear message) culture may look toward context and nonverbal messages for interpretation of the meaning of the feedback; therefore, the manner in which the teacher delivers the message and not just the words used when she gives feedback may be the focus of a holistic student's attention. By contrast, a student from a specific orientation (low context and linear message) culture may focus on the words or message itself. In this situation, the words used would be particularly important for effective feedback. Additionally, students from a holistic culture would tend to be influenced by possible face costs, while students from a specific orientation may be more influenced by the cost of personal effort and inference by the teacher for doing so.

Students from an individualistic (independent) culture are projected to seek feedback directly from their teachers; while students from a collectivist (interdependent) culture would tend to ask their peers and not their teachers. Students from an individualistic culture would request information about their performance on a task, but collectivist culture students if they asked their teacher or peers would likely request feedback about the nature of the task or performance of the group. Students from a high tolerance for ambiguity culture (e.g., United States) would not ask for feedback often but students from a low tolerance for ambiguity culture would desire more feedback more often. However, actually seeking feedback would be influenced by one's specific-holistic and individualist-collectivist orientation, status identity – either high or low – and perception of the teacher's culture. In a high-status identity, DeLuque and Sommer (2000) indicate that seeking feedback from superiors may be interpreted as an insult or criticism of one's superiors or organization. Therefore, students who come from a high-status identity culture and a collectivist culture would not be likely to request feedback or other information on various tasks from their teachers.

DeLuque and Sommer (2000) conclude that culture will affect whether and how an individual seeks feedback, from whom, the topic, and costs for requesting feedback. They expect the individualist-collectivist cultural orientation to lead collectivists to value feedback when it addresses the task or the group rather than themselves. However, at least three earlier studies (Gudykunst, et al., 1996; and Earley, et al., 1999; and Markus & Kitayama, 1991) vary with DeLuque and Sommer (2000) collectivists' value of feedback for task or group over self. Gudykunst et al. (1996) and Earley et al. (1999) differ with DeLuque and Sommer (2000) on the influence of collectivism and present empirical evidence to show that it is mediated by individual-level factors; while Markus and Kitayama (1991) differ on the focus on the feedback,

indicating that it is the relationship with the feedback provider to which interdependents would respond rather than to the task.

Earley et al. (1999) found that collectivism did not preclude individual-level feedback from contributing to a collectivist person's self efficacy as the literature (citing Triandis, 1995) predicted. Both individual- and group-level feedback were found to contribute to a collectivist's self efficacy, whereas an individualist's self-efficacy was only affected by personal-level feedback. They interpret their findings to not entirely support the individualism-collectivism cultural dimension.

Gudykunst et al. (1996) also found collectivism to be mediated by individual factors; personal values and views of the self were better predictors of low-context (direct messages) and high-context (indirect messages) communication styles than individualism-collectivism. Individualism and collectivism exist in all cultures, therefore, they alone cannot predict an individual's behavior; individual-level factors must be considered (Gudykunst et al., 1996).

They found further that self construals accounted for more variance in low- and high-context communications styles than either values or the individualism-collectivism dimension. Therefore, it may be inferred that students may be guided more by their own self construals in seeking, receiving and interpreting feedback than by the individualist-collectivist dimension of the predominant culture with which they associate. These findings indicate that consideration on how to effectively deliver feedback to students would need to be approached on a student-by-student basis.

Gudykunst et al.'s (1996) self-construal focus builds on the earlier and often-referenced study of Markus and Kitayama (1991, p. 224) who found that cultures affect one's self construals which, in turn, often 'determine' different cognitive, emotive, and motivational orientations. In

particular, they argue that Asian cultures hold interdependent self construals wherein self-in-relation with others holds primacy for the self in contrast with Western independent self construals wherein not self-in-relation to others but self as individual holds primacy. They (1991, p. 245-246) maintain that an individual's self construal constitutes 'the defining features of the self.' These self views orient the mind to similarly perceive situations, experiences or patterns, either independent or interdependent.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) address feedback directly and in terms of self construals; students with interdependent self construals would tend to interpret feedback in terms of the self: if feedback is negative, they would be more likely to interpret feedback as disapproval of the self, and if positive, as approval of the self. If so, then care needs to be exercised when giving interdependently-oriented students feedback. This potential effect also has implications for the importance of teachers building positive relationships with students with interdependent self views, as with all students. Perhaps for feedback to be effectively received, a positive relationship will first have to be established, then maintained.

Interaction of feedback with culture may also influence what has been interpreted as the strong effect of feedback (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996); that is, feedback may be confounded with relationship for students with interdependent self construals. For example, a classroom where teachers give feedback to enhance learning is hypothesized to reflect higher levels of student-teacher interactions than a non-feedback classroom. Therefore, interdependently-oriented students may perceive and respond to these interactions relative to their perception of their relationship with the teacher, positively or negatively; that is, what has been measured as feedback effect may be in some cases relationship effect.

Determining whether feedback may be confounded with relationship is important because it can inform our practice. By untangling relationship and feedback, we can better structure our instructional approaches to enhance student learning in the classroom. Empirical research is needed in this area. In summary, a student's view of self indicated to vary by culture appears to play a role in receipt of, interpretation of and response to feedback.

Culture and Questioning.

What exactly constitutes effective teacher questioning in formative assessment and does it vary by culture, particularly student culture? Two formative assessment application studies seem to provide some insight: Torrance and Pryor (2001) who worked with teachers in primary schools and Black et al. (2003) who worked with teachers in secondary level schools. Two observations derive from the two studies, 1) Torrance and Pryor (2001): questioning often has implications for effect on students and sensitivity is needed to help students feel comfortable and engage cognitively; and 2) Black et al. (2003): questioning intends to stimulate and draw out student thinking and to engage students interactively in discussion and exchange, to which feedback subsequently can be applied to further learning even more.

Questioning appears to have been generally effective with students of English background, but what about the effects of questioning on students of diverse cultures who are reticent to speak up in class? If the purpose of directed verbal questioning is to draw out student thinking – the what, the how, the why, and what next – does that thinking need to be elicited through direct verbal in-front-of-the-whole-class type of questioning? Can student thinking be stimulated and demonstrated at least initially through other processes, especially if questioning is considered to have effects with some students that do not contribute to learning?

If teacher questioning varies by country – Germany, the United States and Japan – as demonstrated by Kawanaka and Stigler (1999), then it appears very likely that student response to teacher questioning would also differ by country and culture. A review of the literature on culture and questioning located indicates questioning varies by culture – in meaning, interpretation and effect. However, this appraisal is extracted from literature that discusses questioning often in context of another issue. A good empirical study is needed that examines how teacher verbal questioning affects students of various cultures in the classroom.

A study by Newmann, Bryk and Nagaoka (2001) found that "authentic intellectual work" emphasizing interactive student engagement increased learning gains by 24.5 percent in reading and 31 percent in math above the national average on The Iowa Test of Basic Skills for participating Chicago Public School third, sixth and eighth grade students. Their report does not reveal whether they used direct verbal teacher questioning of students in class. It does state that students were often asked to formulate and solve problems, test their ideas with other students, and use elaborated statements orally and in writing. Authors estimate that students performed well, in part, because they integrated their knowledge and became motivated to work hard and, in part, because intellectual demands were embedded within classroom tasks. It would appear that questioning does not have to be verbally directed to the entire class for student thinking to be solicited and expressed. Therefore, alternate forms of inquiry may also be used and be effective.

Markus and Kitayama (1991, p. 224) call attention in their opening line to a major difference in cultural approach between the United States and Japan: "In America, 'the squeaky wheel gets the grease.' In Japan, 'the nail that stands out gets pounded down.' " These two approaches are represented in their two views of the self: the independent self that chooses to stand out and in so doing be self realized; and the interdependent self that chooses to fit in and

realize self in terms of others. They did not discuss questioning per se, but a logical extension would indicate that Western or American students would be more comfortable and likely to respond to direct verbal questions and Asian students would not. Therefore, a nonverbal means of questioning may be more effective at drawing out Asian students' thinking.

In a study on the effect of self construals on talking, Kim and Markus (2005) found that East Asian-interdependent selves place responsibility on the listener rather than on the speaker and associate good thinking with reserve; Western-independent selves place responsibility on the speaker and associate good thinking with direct speech. On a very general level, interdependent selves or East Asians are indicated to prefer silence to speaking and perhaps a nonverbal way to demonstrate their thinking. This would again imply that one's culture would play a role in how students may respond and communicate.

Preference for nonverbal expression is consistent with literature reviewed on Native American views on culture and questioning. Wetsit (1999, p. 190) advises counselors to refrain from direct questioning and instead "learn to observe carefully and rely on nonverbal communication clues rather than verbal indicators." She identifies the extent of indirect communication in American Indian culture in her example of a son who displeased with his mother's actions cannot tell her directly. Similarly, Yazzie (1999) says that when researchers need to ask the elders for help, they cannot ask directly. And a booklet published by the Central Consolidated School District No. 22 (1986, p.20) advising teachers on Navajo taboos and beliefs states that young people (not defined) should not ask too many questions, especially with elder people; it is "disrespectful for a young person to take a short cut to wisdom and knowledge from elder person when it took the elder person a lifetime to gain his knowledge."

The cultural views on questioning and talking presented here for Asian, Asian American, Native American and Navajo students illustrate that direct verbal questioning may not only be less effective with them but may distinctly disadvantage them because questioning that calls for a direct verbal response runs counter to their training, generally. However, it is helpful to recall that available literature represents a general view of culture that varies with the individual and particular circumstance.

Culture and Peer Assessment and Self Assessment.

Formative assessment places the student at the center of his learning environment; virtually requiring him to employ autonomy and self assessment in service of his learning process. Awareness and evaluation of needs and next steps constitutes self assessment, which leads to positive learning outcomes (Paris & Paris, 2001), including responsibility for one's own learning. Autonomy relates to the student's choice to take needed next steps to support his learning goals, considered essential to self assessment. Autonomy is the basis of formative assessment say Marshall & Brummond (2006).

However, Markus and Kitayama (1991, p. 227) characterize autonomy as distinguishing independent from interdependent selves and maintain that interdependent selves do not display autonomy in the same manner as independent selves. How then would interdependent students engage in formative assessment? The issue of autonomy appears potentially problematic for students of diverse cultures.

Yet, Ryan and Deci (2006; Ryan, 1993) claim that autonomy is not independence, but self governance. Ryan and Deci (2006) insist, supported by empirical studies, that autonomy is cross-cultural and does not conflict with but enhances relationships. This view contrasts with

Markus and Kitayama's (1991) representation of autonomy, which renders self assessment culture bound. Clarification is needed.

One reason peer assessment may be effective is because during peer discussion the use of learning strategies is made visible (Paris & Paris, 2001). Black et al. (2003) added peer assessment alongside self assessment to their list of formative assessment practices because they learned through experience that student collaboration helped students develop the awareness, perceptions and skills with which to self assess. This paper endorses that modification, but does so based on culture, and here is why.

Self assessment is a subset of self-regulation (Paris & Paris, 2001) and self-regulation demonstrates a cultural effect albeit mixed (e.g., Kurman, 2001; Pillay, Purdie & Boulton-Lewis, 2000; Purdie & Hattie, 1996). Purdie and Hattie (1996) theorized that educational and cultural differences between Western and Asian societies would result in their use of different self-regulated learning and strategies. Their (1996) study of Australian, Japanese, and Japanese studying in Australia upper secondary school students demonstrated both cultural similarities and differences. They found all groups engaged in self checking and physical structuring of the environment. But Australian students engaged in more goal setting and planning; Japanese students in more memorization; and Japanese students studying in Australia used more review of notes. Statistical examination of strategies by group revealed that Japanese students studying in Australia adopted learning strategies more like Australians than Japanese, indicating an effect for culture. Purdie and Hattie (1996) suggest additional cultural differences in the use of: 1) self evaluation strategies, found by Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1988) to be one of the least used strategies by American students; and 2) willpower identified by Japanese students as a strategy. but not recognized as one by Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1988).

Using self-report instruments to identify concepts of learning and motivation for high school students in Malaysia and Australia, Pillay, et al. (2000) identified three learning concepts of which one was associated with cultural expectations – learning as a duty – based on the collectivist nature of Malaysian society. The other two concepts demonstrated by both groups of students were surface learning and deep learning.

Kurman (2001) applied level of hierarchy in a culture as an indicator of collectivism to study and show cultural differences in self regulation. She found that Singaporeans who have more of a hierarchical culture chose safer options and lower goals on a computerized task compared to Israelis who have a more egalitarian culture and chose riskier and higher goals. She theorized that people from egalitarian cultures experience more risk and ambiguity and are more inclined to take chances, whereas people from hierarchical cultures adopt more cautious strategies (Kurman, 2001, p. 499).

Because of the value for relationships found in various cultures (e.g., Flaherty, 1978; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Nisbett et al., 2001, 2003; Trumball et al., 2001) peer assessment may be particularly engaging for many students. Earley (1993) found in examining the effect of group membership on individuals' performance, alone and in a group, with Chinese, Israeli and American managers that collectivists worked better when working with an in-group than when working alone or with an out-group and individualists worked better when working alone than with a group, whether in-group or out-group. His findings suggest that students from a collectivist or interdependent culture may perform better collaborating with others who are similar, while students from an individualist or independent culture would perform better when working alone. However, a study by Thanh and Gillies (2010) that sought to learn how Vietnamese students might participate in peer assessment had striking results. The authors said

that the students refused to participate within a single group because they were not confident about exchanging feedback in person. But, the students would participate when the feedback was exchanging between groups because they would avoid conflicts with friends and could save face within the group. Here, it seemed to be the value for relationships that discouraged students from exchanging peer reviews that could lead to tensions.

This section concludes that albeit mixed, culture affects feedback, questioning and peer/self assessment. Therefore, it is recommended that these practices be modified to become more culturally available to more students.

Part Three: Multicultural Formative Assessment

Practices.

The purpose of this section is to begin a discussion on how the practices of feedback with marking, questioning and peer assessment and self assessment may be varied to accommodate students of diverse cultures. To indicate increased cultural availability of formative assessment, its practices may be somewhat culturally modified as in the table below.

Table 1. Cultural Formative Assessment

Formative assessment (Black et al, 2003)	Multicultural formative assessment
Questioning	Multimodal inquiry and response
Feedback through marking	Culturally tailored feedback
Peer- and self-assessment	Peer assessment and self assessment
Formative use of summative assessment	Formative use of summative assessment

To tailor formative assessment to varied student cultures may appear daunting. As Gipps and Murphy (1994, p. 274) projected in reference to context: “In an assessment which looks for best rather than typical performance, the context of the item should be the one which allows the pupil to perform well; this would suggest different contexts for different pupils or groups, an awesome development task.”

Perhaps, more student discussion and collaboration across practices in working with diverse students would be a start in culturizing formative assessment. Black et al. (2003) state that one of the most difficult but necessary areas for students in moving toward self assessment was students' thinking of work or assignments in terms of learning goals. As a result of working together, students gained understanding of and improved their ability to set learning goals for themselves. Torrance and Pryor (2001) found that student collaboration was helpful in students' understanding the meaning of questions. Klenowski (1995) says that students became more reflective and reported better understanding of assessment criteria as a result of discussions. Students also reported increased understanding when feedback was discussed with the teacher. Collaboration helps students cognitively (Black et al., 2003; Klenowski, 1995; Torrance & Pryor, 2001) and affectively (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991); consequently, formative assessment for diverse students may be furthered by adapting questioning, feedback with marking and peer assessment and self assessment with collaboration. Empirical research is needed to corroborate these suggestions.

Further, perhaps questioning may be multiple in its approach – asking through various venues in addition to verbal teacher questioning and, in tandem, accept nonverbal replies or multimodal formats, such as with the Tebuwa cloth poetry response referenced in the Newfield et al. (2003) study. Perhaps direct verbal in-front-of-the-whole-class type of questioning can be scaffolded while using other forms of inquiry to stimulate and draw out student thinking and expression.

Consideration could also be given to group responses in varied formats to inquiries. Given the proclivity for some students toward relationships, perhaps feedback could be given to students in small groups based upon perceived similarity in the nature of the feedback. This

group aspect to relaying feedback could stimulate students to work together on improving their learning, understandings, problem-solving techniques, or approaches, possibly even encouraging them to engage in mutual or peer evaluations.

And for peer assessment, as also noted by Black et al. (2003), perhaps a scaffolding approach again may be appropriate: interdependent students could begin peer-assessment activities with students similar to themselves; scaffold into peer assessment with dissimilar students; and, then into self assessment with a group followed by self assessment in class activities. Also, students may benefit by being given a choice as to how to participate. Teachers could consider assessments that are interactive or team-based, then scaffold to individual projects/assessments or move back and forth between individual and team-oriented projects.

Summary.

The discussion on how formative assessment practices could integrate aspects that reflect student culture stems from the support- albeit mixed –in the literature of student culture within formative assessment practices. The findings may be mixed because very little literature was available on the effect of culture and formative or classroom assessment practices.

Indeed, the argument and conclusion in this conceptual literature review are necessarily speculative because not much research appears on formative assessment, student learning and culture. In fact, Elwood (2006b) says that information on the effectiveness of formative assessment, particularly, as it applies to underachieving students or students' race, gender, and class constitutes one of the weaknesses of the research. ERIC First Search constituted the primary search engine. The tables of contents of *Assessment in Education*, *Applied Measurement in Education* and *Educational Assessment* were handsearched from 1998 to 2011 but turned up little that could be studied in the context of this research project. However, more items displayed

than before. Some of them dealt with formative assessment within a culture of examination, such as an examination-oriented culture of Confucian heritage. One dealt with how Canadian teachers are not using formative assessment (Beckett, Volante, & Drake (2010). Some dealt with the culture of an institution. Many of them, however, dealt with entries, such as the Japanese language and culture. Few dealt directly with learning, culture and formative assessment.

That culture may have a positive effect on learning and formative assessment suggests that a rich agenda for empirical research exists within the domain of multicultural formative assessment: e.g., whether feedback may be confounded with relationship; the effect of self construals on formative assessment practices; the effect of culture on every aspect of formative assessment as well as how that effect may vary by different factors, such as age, grade level, race, ethnicity, locale-including country, economic status; the effect of culture on different forms of questioning, verbal, whole class, small group, type of group, and individual; and whether the various components of self assessment, such as self evaluation, vary by culture as well as how relationships may affect formative assessment practices.

That student culture reflected within assessment practices may have a positive and possibly dramatic effect on student learning and achievement compels serious examination of the phenomenon. Students in this country drop out, disengage, pass without learning, disturb and sometimes prevent other students from learning. One reason proposed as to why they do so is that school instruction and assessment as now structured is not meaningful to them because it is not structured for them. It is structured for European American middle class students, often designed by European American middle class educators who approach instruction and assessment with a set curriculum based upon the attempted decontextualization of the curriculum and the classroom, which is in fact the contextualization according to the values of the

curriculum or test developers (Broadfoot, 1996a). By adapting classroom and formative assessment to student culture – supported by the cognitive epistemological foundation articulated by Shepard (2000) – rather than by adapting student culture to assessment as traditionally approached, more students may engage, find instruction meaningful and persevere in the learning and academic program.

Although educational researchers may study the effects of student culture on formative or classroom assessment practices, arguably, even before such examination, attention needs to be given toward how classroom teachers address student culture within their classroom assessment practices. How can researchers begin to develop informed recommendations for incorporating student culture in assessment without knowledge of what classroom assessment and culture practices actually are? A foundation of actual teacher practices in classroom assessment and student culture would drive the research on not only how to incorporate student culture within classroom assessment, but also on which cultural assessment practices may influence learning, how they may do so and cultural variations of those practices.

Chapter 2

Methods

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to learn based upon their statements what teachers' reported perceptions were relative to incorporating student culture within their classroom assessment practices. It further sought to learn how they did what they reported and whether and how they used formative assessment in their classrooms.

Sample

Criteria.

Because the object of study is teachers' stated perceptions of whether and how they accommodate student culture within classroom assessment practices, a criterion sample composed of all participants having experience with culturally diverse learners and, consequently, a likely consciousness of student culture was required (Creswell, 1998). That sample primarily consisted of fourth and fifth grade elementary teachers teaching in dual language programs.

Teachers in dual language programs were chosen as the criterion sample because cross-cultural competence is one of the three goals that dual language programs are designed to develop (<http://www.duallanguagenm.org/101.html>); therefore, these teachers were expected to be aware of students' culture. The other two goals of dual language programs are "high academic achievement in two languages" and "additive bilingual and bi-literate proficiency," (<http://www.duallanguagenm.org/101.html>). Because of the cross-cultural goal, teaching in dual language programs constituted the primary criterion. The study sought to discover through their statements how teachers would report their experience of student culture in assessment; which

cultural-related aspects they would identify; how they would report them and the conditions under which they would indicate that they do so.

Elementary-level teaching was selected as an additional criterion for the sample because, typically, elementary-level students are in one classroom throughout the day and, as such, elementary teachers have more opportunity to observe and interact with them. In other words, they were more likely to be in a position to identify and be familiar with their students' cultures and, consequently, incorporate culturally-related features within their classroom assessments.

The sample was narrowed to primarily fourth and fifth grade teachers because they are the teachers considered most likely at the elementary level to employ structured classroom assessments. Nicholson & Anderson (1993) noted that primary level teachers use observation extensively for assessment purposes and Adams & Hsu (1998) found significant differences among the types of assessment strategies, tasks and techniques used by first through fourth grade teachers.

Additional sample selection criteria were that participants must: 1) have a minimum of four years' of teaching experience; 2) administer or create classroom assessments; 3) be able and willing to be interviewed at length, re-interviewed, and recorded; 4) be articulate and 5) agree to give feedback/verification regarding their classroom assessment practices experiences.

Teachers were required to have a minimum of four years of classroom teaching experience in order that they would be likely to have experience constructing and administering classroom assessments. This was considered desirable in order that they would not be focused on the issue of constructing classroom assessments, as possibly new classroom teachers might be. Early in the selection process, their length of teaching experience was ascertained.

The second sample requirement arises from the purpose of the study. In order to incorporate culture into classroom assessment practices, teachers must be in a decision-making capacity regarding implementation of, at least, some assessment practices. In my preliminary communication to prospective teacher participants prior to the interviews, I informed teachers that I was seeking teacher input on their classroom assessment practices, how they construct them and what they consider when they do so. I attempted to meet this second requirement prior to the in-person interviews by elucidating that construction and decision factors related to classroom assessment constituted a central part of the research objective.

The third and fourth additional requirements stem from my need to be able to utilize and publish the data from the interviews as needed. Finally, teachers' feedback and verification is desirable to establish credibility for the proposed study's outcome. In pre-interview communication, prior to completing the consent form and on the consent form itself, I informed participants that the study required a level of articulateness, that participation in the study and in the verification process was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw or discontinue participation at any time.

Selection.

Selection of study participants originated with the Dual Language Education of New Mexico (DLeNM) Executive Director providing a list of potential participant names of fourth and fifth grade teachers possessing a minimum of four years' teaching experience. Although I contacted the individuals on the executive director's original list, I did not obtain the 10 to 12 teachers I desired for the sample. Thereafter, through the internet, I identified local schools designated as dual language program schools with the intent of recruiting fourth and fifth grade teachers there. In addition, the DLeNM Executive Director offered a second list of potential

participants. Other participants were identified through snowball sampling, that is, receiving referrals of possible participants from participants. In order to protect the confidentiality of potential participants' decision, the Executive Director was not informed who did or did not choose to participate in the study.

Participant Characteristics.

A total of eleven elementary school teachers from three different school districts were interviewed over a period of six months. Eight teachers taught within an urban area and three taught within less populated areas. All three school districts are located within the same southwestern state.

Four of the teachers were fifth grade teachers. Four were fourth grade teachers. One taught both fourth and fifth grade, one was a third grade teacher and one was an elementary art teacher who taught all grade levels. Although the art teacher is not the traditional type of fourth and fifth grade teacher because he teaches a specific subject to all elementary grade levels, he, nevertheless, assessed fourth and fifth grade students, met the other participant requirements and offered a unique perspective to the research question. In a similar vein, the third grade teacher was included as a participant because she met the sample criteria. Although a third grade teacher, she said she engaged in structured assessments as opposed to assessments solely based on teacher observation.

Two teachers were between the ages of 20-29; six were within the age range of 30-39; two were in the 40-49 age range; and one was between 50-59 years of age. Four were Hispanic, three were Caucasian, two identified their heritage as Mexican, and two as Latin American. Six were females and five were males.

Participants.

First are descriptions of the fifth grade teachers, then the fourth grade teachers, and, finally, the third grade and the art teachers. All of the fifth grade teachers taught within the larger urban school district.

Fifth grade teachers included Marissa, a female, within the 20-29 year age group, who identified herself as Mexican. She described her school as having two populations: one that is comprised of long-term residents and families and the other that is a "magnet population" who come for the Dual Language and Fine Arts Program (p. 4); so there are "very, very affluent" and "very, very, very needy" kids (p. 5). She has a Master's Degree and plans to pursue a Ph.D. She is married with two children and lives in a small town just outside the city. She has been teaching in the dual language program at her current school for six years.

Phillip, a male, is within the 30-39 year bracket. He identified himself as Brazilian. He came to the United States with his family at a young age and could not speak English when he arrived. He is married to a woman with a Ph.D. and has one young son. Phillip has been teaching in the dual language program for four years.

Lorna, a female, is in her 30s. Married to a man with a Ph.D., she has two children and characterized herself as 'Chicano.' She has been teaching in the dual language program for eight years with seven at her once-magnet school. She described her school's community as "changing" and a "microcosm of society at large," (p. 6) where the students, parents and staff have to "confront" each other as they do when they go out into the world, (p. 7).

Mijael, is male, in his 30s and single. He enjoys sports when he is not teaching or involved with his students. He has been teaching in the dual language program for 11 years, all at

the same school. Born in Mexico like Marissa, he identified himself as Mexican. Mijael described the school vicinity as being of lower socioeconomic status.

Mark teaches both fourth and fifth grade. He is male, in his 30s and married with two sons. He enjoys playing sports with them and spends time during the summer playing baseball and tennis. Caucasian and a fluent Spanish speaker, he has been teaching in the dual language program for 15 years with 13 of them at his present school. Mark described the locale in which he teaches as mixed working class and professional, reflecting he says, the minority-majority population of the state. Mark was an anthropology major in school.

Of the four fourth grade teachers, two teach within the larger urban school district and two teach at rural district schools. Tim is male, in his 30s and single. He said, he “enjoys” both the school where he teaches - a school where he has taught in the dual language program for seven of his 10 teaching years – and feels “like a part of this community” in which the school is located (p. 6). Having various members of the same family in his class over the years, he advocated for the familial nature of the school and its inner-city community. Caucasian and fluent in Spanish, he teaches all his classes in Spanish.

Cecilia, a female, is single and between 20 and 29 years of age. Raised within the state, her mother is a bilingual educator herself. Cecilia has enjoyed extensive travel with her family, and reports travelling to Spain and other areas abroad. She has been teaching in the dual language program for five years at her current school, which she describes as having a “real like family” atmosphere (p. 1). She said that she, particularly, enjoys teaching young children. Her school is located in an older neighborhood in the city with a mixture of families from Mexico and the state.

Jocelyn is female, single and in her 30s. She said she teaches in a rural district; it is located in a different vicinity of the state. She has been teaching for 11 years, seven of them as a dual language program teacher. She teaches in an older part of town that she describes as being of lower socioeconomic status and “not the best of neighborhoods” at night (p. 1). She described many of her students as coming from families with little education.

Like Jocelyn, Magdalena also teaches fourth grade in a rural district that until recently was primarily agriculturally-based. She says that many students are from families with little educational capital. Magdalena is from Argentina and has been teaching in the dual language program at her school for four years.

Ashley is a Caucasian third grade teacher, who is fluent in Spanish and in her 30s. She is married with two children. She believes strongly in the dual language concept and her two children are also fluent in Spanish. She described her school’s neighborhood as being a small, rural and very old Spanish community. She and Magdalena teach in the same school district. Most of the students, she says, are below poverty and recent immigrants.

Corwin is an art teacher. He is in his 50s and teaches in an urban school district. He has been teaching in the dual language program for more than 20 years, 12 of those years at his current school. He described his school as being located in an inner city neighborhood.

Pilot Study Interviews

I conducted a pilot study prior to the formal study in order to refine the interview questions and learn additional information that may be helpful for the actual study. Four dual language program educators were interviewed for the pilot. They, like the main study participants, completed consent forms prior to the beginning of the interviews. They also were asked the same questions. The pilot interviews helped me to develop more awareness of when to

intervene to ask follow-up questions, as well as the type of questions to pose, and when to permit the teacher to elaborate unimpeded. I became aware of the desirability, at times, of bounded questions and timeframes.

The pilot interviews also helped me become more familiar with the recording equipment and develop an organized process for myself, which included setting up the recording equipment prior to the interview, when possible. The pilot interviews did not provide any of the data for the main interviews. Overall, their function was preliminary and helped me become better prepared for the main interviews.

Main Study Interviews

Focused in-depth semi-structured in-person recorded interviews were held with all of the eleven teacher interviewees. The purpose of the interviews was to discover if and how based upon their reported perceptions classroom teachers consider student culture within their classroom assessment practices.

Teachers were asked to read and sign the consent form immediately upon arrival at the interview site. At that time, I reviewed the content of the consent form with them as well as gave them time to carefully read the consent form on their own, as well as ask any questions that they may have. Only after both the teacher had reviewed the consent form and we both had signed it, did the interview proceed.

The content of the research interviews was the result of both my questions posed to address the research question directly and topics that teachers discussed. The interviews varied in length; most exceeded one hour. Most of the interviews were concluded in one session. In four instances, the interviews were continued and resumed on another day at the request of the teacher. Some teachers had extremely tight schedules and I worked around their commitments.

Once, an interview was rescheduled due to recording difficulties. The content of the interviews centered on the interview questions. The order of the questions was generally guided by teachers' statements and posed at times that seemed relevant and timely given the particular discussion point at the time. Thus, the order of the questions varied by teacher. The interviews occurred at a site selected by the teacher. The interviews were transcribed with the assistance of a professional transcriber. All of the original audio-recordings were reviewed and proofed against the typed transcripts.

Interview Questions

A set of questions was designed to guide the interview and to encourage participants to discuss whether they considered and/or incorporated aspects relating to student culture within their classroom assessment practices. In order to give participants an opportunity to reflect upon their answers, a hard copy of the interview questions was provided to them just before the interview. The intention was to reassure them as well as to inform them of the nature of the questions. I thought that this would provide them the opportunity to respond in a more collected and comprehensive manner. Space on the form was provided for teachers to jot down any preliminary thoughts they may have had in response to the questions.

Participants were reminded of the purpose of the study prior to the interviews. Although, the precise words and order may have changed with particular circumstances and supplemental questions asked as appropriate, teachers were generally asked the following primary questions:

- 1) Describe your school's philosophy on classroom assessment.
- 2) Describe your teaching philosophy.
- 3) Tell me about your assessments. How do you assess your students' learning? What do you have them do?

- 4) How do student diversity, student characteristics, or student culture, and classroom assessment come together in your classroom?

During the interviews, I reminded teachers that their identities were confidential and asked if there was anything they would like omitted from the conversation. Toward the end of the interview, I also asked them an open-ended question: "Is there anything else you'd like to add or mention that we didn't cover?" This was to enable the participants to discuss anything possibly omitted or that they would like to clarify in a previous comment. The question was also intended to reassure the participants that they had final authority over their own statements. I also wanted to help them to feel as comfortable as possible.

Verification

Once the data had been transcribed and analyzed, I developed a three-page synopsis (Appendix B) of the study's results and sent them to all participants. I solicited their individual views, questions and comments. This was done for the purpose of verification. I also wanted to share the results with them because they were study participants. This was out of respect for their involvement in the process. Prior to the study, I told them I would provide them with the results, I was also following through with my commitment. I was hoping to receive comments from more of them, but only two responded. One said she thought the report was "GREAT!" And the other said he found the report "interesting." He also shared with me a little about his life right now. Prior to sending out the synopsis, I spoke with a few of the participants by phone. But, I only received a response from the two as indicated.

Demographic Data Sheet

In addition to a hard copy of the interview questions, participants were provided with a demographic data sheet (Appendix C) to complete.

Analytical Procedures

The study enabled teachers to describe their beliefs, feelings and stories in relation to culture and their students' assessment process. In order to study and analyze the teachers' interview transcripts, three qualitative approaches were employed: transcendental phenomenology, inductive content analysis and domain analysis. Phenomenology guided the data collection, inductive qualitative analysis guided the data analysis, and domain analysis was used to organize the data.

Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach stipulates that research not only begins with a person's perception but regards it as "the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted," (p. 52). This respect for a person's perceptions corresponds with the primary purpose of the study: to learn teachers' perceptions of accommodating culturally-related features within their assessment approaches and practices. According to Moustakas (1994), the purpose is to learn the participant's experience. This requires that, "The human scientist determines the underlying structures of an experience by interpreting the originally given descriptions of the situation in which the experience occurs," (p. 13). To do so, requires not only identifying the experience, but "what an experience means" for the person who has had the experience, (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). Therefore, the experience, its structure and what that experience may mean for the person having the experience were sought.

Additionally, Moustakas' transcendental approach calls for the researcher to set aside her own views, judgments, ideas and attempting to be "completely, open, receptive and naïve" in listening to participants. I sought to do that. Plus, Moustakas is concerned with participants' feelings as well as thoughts. As it was my intention to capture both teachers' thoughts and

feelings and in as open a way as possible, Moustakas' phenomenology represented the ideal approach to guide the design, data collection and goals of my study.

Emerging, coding and categorizing data.

Once teachers' perceptions were obtained through the interview process, the transcribed interviews were reviewed and analyzed using inductive qualitative analysis. The purpose of inductive qualitative analysis is to attempt to understand social reality by exploring the meanings of words, statements and/or discourse (Zhang & Wildemouth, 2009). I began analysis of teachers' narratives by attempting to ascertain the subjects within their discussions. This process of text identification actually preceded the process of open coding, wherein a set of general codes are selected to facilitate review (Zhang & Wildemouth, 2009). The way text identification worked was that initially each interview was analyzed independently of the others, thereby, allowing its own set of descriptive words to emerge from the text. I did this to enable each of the 11 interviews to generate its own set of data and not have coding imposed upon it. This was so the data could emerge freely. For example, among the initial descriptive text that emerged within one interview were the following: standards, assessment, data folder, scores, behavior, collaboration, data, classroom management, learning behavior, responsibility, relevance, hands-on, cooking, tongue, scripted, teacher assessment, day of the dead, and so on. Another set of descriptive text from a different interview included terms, such as: linguistic sensitivity, culture, package, rubrics, writing and assessment, observation, state standards-based assessment, district-mandated tests, lots of tests, culturally and linguistically diverse population, different administrations, opportunity, self esteem and so on. Only after the transcriptions had been read and reviewed and reviewed numerous times was I finally able to discern some set of mutually

applicable topics that could be used across transcripts. Thus, a set of general codes emerged that were appropriate across interviews.

I hand coded the transcriptions. Reading each one, I would enter the appropriate word, or phrase, alongside the set of text as I went through each data set. For example, classroom assessment would be indicated in the margin of the page if a teacher addressed classroom assessment in that location. Eventually, classroom assessment would be indicated if the teacher also addressed rubrics, scores or type of assessment, that is, if the category became narrower but still applied. I was able to discern these tighter categories after repeated reviews of the data. These narrower representations of the data became a second tier of codes.

Qualitative inductive analysis is essentially a process of data reduction (Potter, 2004). By continuing to review the data re-analyzing and re-categorizing, I eventually arrived at narrower conceptual and factual elements within their discourses. By persistently and continually reconsidering the conceptual and factual elements and their relationships, I succeeded in organizing all of the data into categories, ultimately, unveiling a discrete and highly-organized portrait of a phenomenon. These categories were the codes.

Once I ascertained what the major codes or domains were, I established a set of five tables for each of the 11 participants. Eventually, those 55 tables were assembled and aggregated into five based upon the unifying set of codes. Although teachers' comments and responses were coded, I did not also code or index my questions. Teachers frequently answered a question without my asking it. In the study, I did not restrict inclusion of their statements to their responses to my specific questions. If they answered the question anywhere in the study, I used it.

I ordered the data from eventually broader into narrower categories by using a research model based upon Spradley's taxonomical hierarchical domain analysis (Spradley, 1978). Because domain tables and charts are designed to organize data by presenting larger categories and subdividing them into narrower subcategories, domain tables and charts assist in visualizing relationships among the data. The categories that I identified, working inductively, came from the discourse content. I grouped categories by common themes; common themes that relate to one central organizing factor are typically referred to as "domains." Domains constitute the largest type of category and contain several related categories.

For example, eventually the transcripts reflected that various text units could be grouped together in one broad concept, or domain, such as Standardized Assessment. Gradually, after re-sifting through the data, more precise categories among the data could be identified. The analysis process actually went from identification of the discrete to revealing common themes to, once again, contracting back to narrower categories within the general themes. For example, within the Standardized Assessment domain, first, came the observation of considerable discussion of standardized assessments and No Child Left Behind. Second, categories among that data were discerned. They are effects on curriculum, effects on dual language students and modifications. I perceived categories to have their own categories, or subcategories. For example, that teachers perceived standardized assessments to have an effect on the curriculum generated the subcategories: amount of time spent on assessment, timing of No Child Left Behind-related standardized assessments, other curriculum effects and teaching standards. The teaching standards sub-category itself has effects, or sub-sub categories, which include: restricting the curriculum, teaching to the test, and specific effects on teachers' own classroom practices. Thus, the categories and their narrower respective sub-categories organize teachers' comments into

specific topics in order to discuss them. By employing Spradley's (1978) hierarchical chart methodology, a visual taxonomy of how these categories fit together was represented.

***Example Standardized Assessment Domain Chart**

Effect on Curriculum	Amount of time allocated to assessment		
	Timing of standardized assessments		
	Teaching of the standards		
		Curtailed curriculum	
		Teaching to the test	
			Acknowledge
			Deny
			No response
		Effects on one's own classroom practices	
			Instruction
			Assessment
Effect on DL students	Vocabulary		
		State test	
		District test	
	Language		
		English	
		Spanish	
	Culturally-related references		
		State test	
		District test	
	Consequences		
		Student placement and morale	
		Teacher distrust of the testing apparatus	
Modifications and Accommodations			
	Acknowledge		
	Deny		

*Each category has within it 11 response slots consisting of teacher quotes, as appropriate, to facilitate comparing responses across teachers.

Ethics

All participants signed individual consent forms prior to the beginning of the interviews and prior to their being presented with either the list of interview questions or the demographic data sheet to complete. Their signed consent forms were approved in my original dissertation proposal. All teacher related materials, including the original recordings, the interview transcripts, and the signed consent and demographic forms are secure in the researcher's private office.

To protect participants' identity and insure confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used to represent the teachers. Although I attempted to preserve many of their personal characteristics in order to retain as close a fidelity as possible to their distinctive attributes, potentially identifying details, such as which state or country they may be from originally, have been changed to protect their identities.

Teachers were offered financially modest incentives for participating in the study. They were presented with \$25 gift cards from a local bookstore, which I purchased. In addition, Dual Language Education of New Mexico, which endorsed this study, agreed to contribute one free admission for a research participant to their annual conference. It was to be awarded by random sampling. However, not all teachers wanted to accept the gift card and the teacher who won the free admission declined it. Participants were offered these remunerations as a thank you in appreciation for their time and participation. They were intended in fair return for their contribution of time.

Ensuring Rigor

As previously noted, all of the interviews were recorded. This was done to assure rigor and accuracy of the data. To further assist with insuring integrity of the data, the recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber.

During the initial stage of data review I reviewed all of the transcripts 11 different times to identify main topics. The purpose for the multiple reviews was to check myself and assure rigor in eliciting the main and subordinate topics. Because some of the transcripts were lengthy - exceeding 100 pages in length - numerous content and context words were contained in them. I considered constant reconsideration necessary in order to accurately and consistently identify themes in the data. Once I became confident that I identified the topics from the teachers' points of view as best I could, I developed a preliminary table for each participant that identified the main topic and subtopic discussed by transcript page number. The table also more specifically described the nature of the statement/s related to the topics and subtopics. Those initial tables were then used to begin to place quotes by teacher into separate main topic tables. I developed, completed, reviewed and revised the tables on each topic by teacher approximately four different times before arriving at final placement of the quotes by topic. Before arriving at the final 55 tables, I had produced a minimum of 220 tables on the teachers, their topics and quotes.

Once the main topics and related subtopics were identified, the appropriate quotes had to be incorporated. Sometimes a teacher's quote could be used for more than one topic and sometimes one part of the quote carried a different emphasis than another part. During the period of data analysis, I spent a significant period of time carefully deliberating on the best placement of the quotes. Predominately, I was guided in my decision-making process by what I considered to be the teachers' primary point of emphasis not only based upon the particular quote and

surrounding context, but, eventually, on what I had come to know of that teacher and her orientation. Ultimately, my decision-making was informed by my own interpretation of my continual reading of the entire transcripts as well as by various telephone conversations with the teachers in the study. Throughout the period of time when I was reviewing the data and even during writing, I persistently member-checked any questions I had with participants. In selecting quotes to represent various topics, I checked and double checked the original transcript numerous times to ascertain absolute accuracy of the quote and its placement. All quotes were verified several times against their original transcript before presenting them. Quotes are used only once.

Chapter 3

Results

This chapter introduces the data by describing how it is structured both within a chapter and in succeeding chapters. Overall, the research data is organized by broad overarching categories, or domains. Within each domain are progressively smaller and more contained categories and subcategories.

By virtue of my having imposed an hierarchical organization upon the data, my ideas of what constitutes an organizing framework order the results. Correspondingly, influenced by my personal and academic background replete with my own array of subjectivities, I must necessarily bring with me and this data hierarchy a perspective of which I may not always be aware. Consequently, I acknowledge myself as a participant in the research, hopefully not as vocal as the teachers, but present nonetheless.

Domains

As a result of my review and analysis of the interviews with 11 teachers, I identified five domains. The domains align to the interview questions with one exception: standardized assessment. Standardized assessment emerged largely from the teachers' conversations. The five domains are Teacher, Standardized Assessments, School Classroom Assessment Philosophy, Classroom Assessment and Culture.

Teacher is largely about who the teacher says she is and what she says she believes as a teacher. It also includes teachers' stated pedagogical beliefs. ***Standardized Assessments*** primarily presents teachers' reported perceptions of the effect of state and district standardized assessments on the curricula and their students. Standardized assessments were often discussed in relation to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). ***School Classroom Assessment Philosophy*** reports

teachers' responses to questions I posed about the nature of their schools' classroom assessment philosophy.

Meanwhile, ***Classroom Assessment*** includes teachers' descriptions of their classroom assessment philosophies and practices, including formative assessment. Finally, ***Culture*** discusses teachers' definitions of culture and their given perspectives as to how culture, or students' individual characteristics, impact learning in their classrooms. It serves to help answer the research question on how teachers, based on their statements, may accommodate individually-related aspects within their instructional and classroom assessment practices.

Structure of research chapters.

Each domain constitutes a separate chapter. Because I conceive both teachers' teaching philosophies and perspectives on standardized assessment to comprise the climate in which they teach and assess, these two domains, Chapters 4 and 5, are presented first. They provide socio-cultural background and context for the remainder of the domains.

The next two chapters are on classroom assessment. Chapter 6 communicates teachers' perspectives on their schools' classroom assessment philosophies. Chapter 7 presents teachers' accounts of their own classroom assessment practices.

The final data chapter, Chapter 8, pertains to culture. It contains teachers' definitions of and discourse on culture in the classroom, both in reference to classroom assessment and instruction.

Each domain chapter is composed of two parts. Part one presents results, or teachers' statements in the form of quotes in that domain. The quotes are typically organized by predominating themes. One quote that I considered to be representative of each domain launches each data chapter. Part two presents my analysis and interpretation of how I perceive their

statements to answer the research question as to how teachers may accommodate student differences and elements commonly associated with culture in their classroom assessments. Because the chapter on standardized assessment developed due to teachers' concerns and was not originally part of this research inquiry, it's analytical perspective stands on its own.

Text symbols.

In order to both convey as much of teachers' reported perceptions as possible while at the same time protecting their confidentiality as well as facilitating readability, various notations to or about the data are made within the text. These are explained in the following table.

Table 2 Guide to Stylistic Abbreviations and Symbols

Stylistic Abbreviation or Symbol	Denotes	Example
Italics	Spanish language	"I'm very aware of the fact that I do it – <i>mijo</i> [my son], <i>mija</i> [my daughter], I will tell them that. It's a very – it's a <i>carino</i> , [loving expression or act] um, " (p. 66). Jocelyn
Caps	Verbal emphasis	"And then maybe they said something wrong and then I'll go back and give a brief little explanation on whatever it is, but there's times, it's a WHOLE group," (p. 81). Cecilia
Brackets	-Spanish translation -explanation -enhancement -deletion of proper name usually within quote -or nature of a text selection, e.g. event or effect	" 'Help, <i>Sr.</i> [Mr.] [name]. I don't want to be her partner anymore," (pp. 38-39). Mijael
Page number for quote	-page number that is located within that teacher's original transcribed interview	" 'She' tough,' " (pp. 38-39). Mijael
TD	-initials for pseudonym for a school district's testing department	"Um, the [district test] does not include a Spanish component, and I've fought that battle many times, um, with TD [the District's Testing Department]. And they have, uh, a wagon-load of excuses for why that's not the case," (p. 31). Mark

Chapter 4

Teacher

Results

“Yes! Yes! It’s always a test to the kids when you tell them - you know, they have these famous people all around us - ‘They were in fifth grade at one point in time.’ And they kind of forget that. ‘So why can’t you be the next president? Why can’t you be the next Leonardo De Vinci?’ And they’re like – ‘Me?’ I’m like, ‘Why not, you know.’...we talk about freeing the person. They’ve already kind of put these shackles on themselves that they can’t be more than this. And the minute you start telling them that they can, it’s almost like, ‘Are you okay? Are you sleep deprived Mr. [name]? Are you dreaming? Because I can’t do those things.’ And my question’s always, ‘Why not?’Philip (p. 67)

Introduction

I consider teaching philosophies to constitute part of the cognitive and instructional context in which teachers labor, teach and assess to help students learn, perform on classroom and mandated standards-based assessments and progress on their academic and life pathways. What teachers do in the classroom to further student learning has consequences for learning (McKeachie, 2002), and teaching philosophies serve to guide that process. Because teachers’ philosophies may well influence whether teachers shape their classroom instruction and assessment practices to include students’ cultures, I asked teachers to describe their teaching philosophies. Teaching philosophies as a topic was not defined for participants in order to not influence their responses. I define teaching philosophies as beliefs about pedagogy and learning which teachers may put into practice. Teaching philosophies have also been defined as rationales on teaching and learning in particular disciplines or contexts (Schonwetter, Soka, Friesen & Taylor, 2002). McKeachie (2002) who produces a handbook on teaching for college and university teachers, offers insight, suggestions and advice that I consider suitable for primary

teachers as well. He refers to teaching "narratives" with components, such as, course goals, audience awareness, student sensitivity, challenging activities, use of concrete and familiar references, scheduling, assessment, and feedback. A rhythm of study, teaching one-on-one as well as in groups - small and large - hands-on work, peer-tutoring and student dyads are among the teaching practices that he endorses. Thus, a teaching narrative or philosophy may consist of rationales, beliefs, narratives, plus sensitivity and awareness of one's students as well as a myriad of approaches and classroom practices on teaching and learning.

Teaching Philosophies

Teachers' comments directly and indirectly revealed the following 12 themes within their teaching philosophies: 1) altruistic goals, 2) the teaching of content and skills, 3) student learning, 4) learning accountability, 5) motivation, 6) teacher expectations, 7) teacher caring, 8) a safe classroom, 9) respect for students, 10) an environment for success, 11) the value of knowing one's students, and 12) pragmatism.

Altruistic goals.

Altruistic goals are defined as student-related idealized goals or values. These include views such as "education is for empowering" and "every student has a right to learn." Four teachers expressed these types of values: Marissa, Magdalena, Jocelyn and Mijael. Within this theme, two subthemes arose: education extends beyond the classroom and learning is for all students.

Education beyond the classroom.

In describing her teaching philosophy, Marissa says,

I think that education should be empowering. Um, I believe that my main role is to teach, um, my students ... they have rights, how to access information, ahm, and how to stand up for their rights. That for me is key. (p. 13)

Similarly, Magdalena said,

Oh, I teach for life. I don't teach for the test. That's the first thing, you know. I teach them for LIFE. I want to teach them to have a skill for FUTURE, for THEIR life, to be in a global. Um, I teach them for their own – for their future, for global – I don't know how to say, um, for a global world, not only for the USA, you know. I gave to them a broad view of the world, not only for [name of state], [name of town], [name of state]. No, I want that they learn for the world and for the future, not for NOW, not for the TEST. (p. 9)

She explained in part, how she prepares them for a global world. "I try to connect everything, you know, the reading with the history, with geography. That's the way I prepare them for the world, you know," (p. 11).

All students can learn.

Meanwhile both Jocelyn and Mijael identified respect for the value that all students can learn. Mijael stressed, "Everyone has a right to learn. You can't take that right from people," (pp. 24-25). And Jocelyn emphasized,

I really believe that every child can learn. You know some of them will be ... Every child is capable of learning, and there's not a child that I would ever say, 'Oh, my gosh, he's hopeless,' because they're not. They're just such wonderful, you know, people. They might not all be able to convey their knowledge in the same way. They may not all be able to write down what they learn, but they can tell me, and if they can tell me, then they're learning something. We just need to kinda work on getting it from their - from their minds to paper, you know. (pp. 17-18)

The teachers who expressed their views of altruistic values addressed empowering students, teaching them for the future and affording them equal opportunity.

Teaching content and skills.

Five teachers referenced the importance of teaching content and skills. Lorna emphasized knowing standards, Marissa, Cecilia and Magdalena focused on skills while Corwin focused on artistic perspectives. Lorna expressed concern for the individual child along with teaching the standards. "I think it's a matter of trying to see each child and see how to help to give them

access to the standards that they need to achieve for the year," (p. 56). Marissa said her students excel at computer research, power points, excel and data analysis.

to be empowered my kids need to know very – how very – to read very well. They should learn how to do research very, very well, um, ah, and learn how to use the tools around them, like technology.... I teach my students how to make Power Points, how to make Excel graphs and charts, um, how to research and look up data, um, how to analyze data, not just look at it, um, and it's important. (p. 14)

She continued, elsewhere:

They can use a computer – very well. Right now all of my students can move Power Points and Excel like whoooooh no others! They know how to look up things in an encyclopedia, on the Internet, in the library... they have tools that they can use to show that they know things, and that's ... the biggest thing. (p. 36)

Cecilia and Magdalena emphasized basic skills, and Corwin artistic skills. Although she acknowledged that "our school's big on technology" (p. 7), Cecilia said,

Sometimes I even tell some of my co-workers, 'OK, we're just fourth grade, like take it down a notch. We need to really focus on the basics here. Because they have fifth grade, middle school and high school to continue. Let's just really focus on the basics here.' (p. 28).

Magdalena explained further how she partly prepares students for a global world, "Because I gave to them the basic skills that they need, for you know. For example, in math – addition, subtraction, multiplication, division – that's universal skill for everybody, you know," (pp. 9 -10). Corwin appeared to relate style to the ability to develop particular artistic skills.

the big thing for me is I want to see them LET go. Yeah, I want to see them be relaxed. I want to see them – I definitely, DEFINITELY want to see them develop skills. Yeah, and as they develop skills, their confidence will grow to try different things, and it's really important to, um, to develop skills within (p. 26)

In describing content, skills and use of technology, these teachers appear to take a broad view of education - one that considers the student in higher grades and in the world.

Student learning.

Within the theme of student learning, teachers primarily discussed: 1) learning as constructivism, 2) prioritizing student thinking, and 3) the importance of teachers being life-long learners.

Learning as constructivism.

Of the six teachers who referenced constructivism, Ashley did so directly.

On my teaching philosophy? Well, I'm definitely a constructivist. I'm not the kind of teacher that believes in like so much a canon of knowledge that ... children should learn facts and learn dates and learn particular formulas – that kind of thing – (pp. 28-29)

And when she expounded on children as a pitcher with her job being to 'stir it up,' or activate it, she added active learning to her constructivist portfolio:

I don't see children as an empty pitcher that I'm trying to fill up. I see them as this full pitcher that's got all these ingredients in it that my job as a teacher is to stir it up, stir it up. Like I'm the spoon in the pitcher stirring it up and getting it EXCITED and blending it all together and making something, you know, helping that stuff in the pitcher come together to create this wonderful beverage, you know. I'm not – I'm NOT the person putting stuff into the pitcher. (p. 29)

Additionally, Mark characterized learning as constructivist when he discussed cognition.

"And, um, especially cognition, which is, um, uh, associating, uh, current learning to prior learning. I mean that's - so bringing in, connecting those two," (p. 53). Like Ashley's disclaimer at "putting stuff" into the pitcher, he, too, protested the transmission method of teaching when he opposed "pouring information into children's heads."

I believe children have a burning desire to learn. Um, I believe that children learn based on what they're exposed to and their intellectual and physical environment. And I do believe that they're going to learn anyway, because they do. Um, however, we know that you can learn good and you can learn bad. And that's what schools, um, I hope are for, is to guide the children's learning, um, so that they learn optimally. It is, however, NOT to open up their heads and pour in information, um, which is what IS encouraged by No Child Left Behind. (pp. 34-35)

Also indicating constructivist views of learning are Lorna, Tim, Philip and Magdalena. Philip wanted learning to be enjoyable and advocated the use of open-ended questions that lead to conversations and discussions, or active learning. Tim rejected standing in front of the room and teaching, thereby possibly suggesting student interaction and active learning. “I try to minimize the amount of kind of teacher sort of: Whole group, I’m standing up there. You guys are all peeled and listening and talking to me,” (p. 17). And when Lorna mentioned students “integrating” learning, she was referencing students constructing their own knowledge.

at some point instead of you showing them how to do it, they’re just doing it. Because they’ve learned enough of those – those approaches, or those processes, or whatever it is, that they start integrating them, and that’s a really neat stage to see. Not all of them achieve it, but I believe all of them achieve some part of it. (p. 62)

Lorna also indicated that she employs students’ prior knowledge.

The world map and the continents and the oceans and all that should be just, um, it should be prior knowledge that they bring with them. And so, it’s trying to reactivate that knowledge so that they can focus in on the U.S. geography, which is their - their, um, responsibility this year. (p.33)

Magdalena illustrated her efforts to identify and supplement students’ prior knowledge.

And sometime here they want us to address only the fourth grade curriculum, you know, without see what is going on, on the back, you know, on the background of the, you know. So, I test them to see which are the REAL skills that they have. Do you understand what I mean? [Yes. You test their prior knowledge?] Yeah, the prior knowledge. No matter if it is addition, one-digit addition. Do you understand what I mean? So, I need to cover all that first and then teach fourth grade curriculum. If no, it doesn’t make any sense, you know, teach them two-digit division if they don’t know the times table, you know. What I’m doing right now, because fourth grade is area, perimeter, geometry, division, probability, but they don’t know the times table. They don’t know how to add, they don’t know how to subtract. (p. 10)

Providing the instructional set-up for students to construct knowledge, link current knowledge to prior knowledge and engage in active learning along with the using open-ended

questions were among the ways that teachers indicated that they implemented a constructivist approach to learning.

Prioritizing student thinking.

Teachers who attested to the importance of independent thinking are Philip, Tim, Ashley, Mark, Lorna and Corwin. Thinking is neither memorization nor having "the right answer," according to Philip, Tim and Mark. Tim said,

It's not about always having the right answer. It's about, you know, sharing what you think, and that's another thing, too. I make mistakes on a daily basis. So, you know, no one's perfect. So, it's not about trying to be perfect. So I mean, I think it worked because, you know, kids – I feel like we had a really open class where kids – yeah, weren't afraid to speak or share. (p. 12)

And Philip said, "Um, I'll purposely make mistakes when I'm doing up there and the kids like, 'Mr. [name], you didn't add $2 + 2$ right.' I'm like 'Prove it,' " (p. 60). Making mistakes is a part of his class motto: "because you know, take chances, make mistakes, um, that's – that's a classroom motto, you know, and I added a thing to it. I said, 'Take chances, make mistakes, learn something,' " (p. 23).

Philip and Mark objected to memorization. Mark laughed, "most teaching was that way. You had to memorize ... all kinds of stuff – the presidents, and you know. For what purpose?...That's not learning at all. That's just a parlor game," (pp. 85-86).

Philip, Mark, Ashley and Corwin disclosed their beliefs that thinking requires cognitive expansion. Mark related thinking to the environment, which he wants to extend beyond the school walls. For example, "we're talking about my philosophies, huh? Um and that, uh - So, I mean learning from your environment, um, natural curiosity, you know," (p. 35). He elaborated:

I don't like the structure of public schools, and I – I – I fear that kids are over-institutionalized especially after *No Child Left Behind*. I think bells are horrible. The only place in our society that we have bells are in schools and prisons. Um,

you know, I think classrooms are incredibly limited with four walls, a ceiling and a floor, and the more you can get out, the better. (p. 37)

Lorna, Corwin and Philip want students to think independently. Philip characterized thinking this way, “What I’m talking about is getting them to think beyond the obvious, you know,” (p. 64). He continued, “So, again, I think the development of critical thinking skills is absolutely vital, vital! um, to being a successful student, successful in life, um, and to teach times tables, it’s not going to get you very far, it really isn’t,” (p. 66). And “It’s important to me that, uh, students learn how to THINK. And to EVALUATE the decisions that they make. The reasons why they make those decisions,” (p. 61). Lorna added, “And whenever we can, we base those [learning] frameworks on the, um, the most solid, academic, critical-type thinking structures that we can come up with,” (p. 43).

Corwin situated thinking in art: “Yeah, so I don’t want them necessarily to come to a particular view of a piece. I want them to HAVE a view. I want them to have an open view, an open vista,” (p. 15). And

[looking for shadow and light is] very sophisticated, it’s super abstract, super difficult to see, but if you – if you’re not open, if you’re not seeing, if you don’t have the windows open to find the view, you’ll never do it. And that’s what doing this over time has done. (pp. 24-25)

He also believed that learning requires “pushing” students cognitively.

and that’s the whole idea, too, is once they get really comfortable, you make them uncomfortable again. Push it so that they – they don’t start sitting back. I mean, you don’t want to do it and make them uncomfortable so it’s really painful, but you always want to keep pushing them just a little bit further so that they keep growing. (pp. 22-24)

He cast ‘pushing’ as the zone of proximal development.

I think it’s called zone of proximal development. You push them, push them, push them, they get really good at something and then, you throw them into cognitive dissonance again by giving them something really hard again. And that way, they don’t – they don’t get lazy. They don’t – don’t just sit. (p. 45)

Life-long learning.

Both Philip and Mark advocated for life-long learning. Philip wanted his students to know that he is a life-long learner, presumably so they will view learning in the same manner.

And Mark expressed the belief that teachers should continually stretch themselves.

I don't believe that education is unilateral ... The more teachers learn from their students, the BETTER, um, the teacher they're going to be. The more teachers, um, continue with lifelong learning, the better teachers they're going to be, and I'M NOT just talking about taking courses at the university. I'm talking about being a well-rounded person and doing and, um, you know, and athletics and art and music and – or whatever your thing is, um, and uh, politics or language or, you know whatever your OTHER INTERESTS are that you can bring into the classroom. (pp. 35-36)

Teachers expressed their foci and approaches on student learning in different ways: by prioritizing and encouraging thinking over having “right answers;” by seeming to tailor their instruction to match students' current level of knowledge and/or understanding and, for two teachers, by believing that they should not only encourage life-long learning in their students but exemplify it themselves.

Learning accountability.

Six teachers - Tim, Philip, Lorna, Magdalena, Mijael and Cecilia- spoke to holding their students accountable for their own learning. Magdalena, Mijael and Philip attested to requiring that students take responsibility for what is taught in the classroom. Magdalena exclaimed,

Of course, we have different levels of learning, but most of the time, you know, ALL get their own responsibility. That's a very important matter, you know, very important – I don't know how to say, um, point, you know, to gave to them the responsibility of learning also. Because sometime many families, half of my class they don't have education and they cannot help them at home. (p. 2)

As Mijael perceived it:

And I guess part of my philosophy is that you have to hold students accountable for their, you know, that they need to know they have to learn. We'll do what we can to try to fit their learning style, but you still have to learn, and that's the bottom line – and why they should learn, and why they need to know this and that's – to me, that's a pretty common sense approach. (p. 25)

Additionally, Tim remarked that he holds students responsible for their peers' learning. "They're motivated because they're seeing that in a sense they're responsible for their, not only their own learning, but helping facilitate other kids' learning as well," (p. 17). While Lorna suggested students taking responsibility for learning may relate to their level of understanding and development as well as being in a dual language program.

Our program is – what word would I use for it? It's challenging. We do more because we have to. Since we're a dual language program, we teach all subjects in both languages, but we actually do more because we have to have a full English literacy block and a full Spanish literacy block. So, we have one more block of instruction that we teach than an English only school. And so, um, there are some components that other teachers in a regular ed English-only setting would be able to give children time to do in class. And our students have to learn to take responsibility for that on their time. And they understand and they know, especially at fifth grade, that they ARE in a rigorous program. They're in a program that demands MORE of them, and the majority of them, the great majority of them, will tell you they're proud of that. (p. 59)

Meanwhile, Cecilia's statement epitomizes the concept of students taking responsibility for their own learning: she cited her school's policy calling for all classrooms to develop mission statements at the beginning of the academic year. In recognition of their importance, her principal, reportedly, posts them in her office.

Every classroom, every individual classroom has a mission and a mission statement....It's like a two-week process for our mission statement, 'cause we really want those kids to write it themselves. Of course, we have to guide them, but....we have a couple questions on the board as to what you need to learn in fourth grade, why you need to learn it, what - like ... what do you expect for your future? Three quick questions. Well then the kids have little note cards, and they could work in groups, partners, whatever, and they try to answer these questionswithin that mission statement, a child has to have been involved, because we try to have them kind of take responsibility for their own learning. (p. 26)

Cecilia appears to work at a school that takes a deliberate and purposeful school-wide approach to holding students accountable for their learning. Eight other teachers indicated awareness of how they approach student learning and appear to utilize intentional practices to foster either

student learning accountability or learning expansion. Learning accountability for students appears to be broadly embraced goal for teachers.

Motivation.

Three teachers, Ashley, Mark and Jocelyn, addressed the importance of motivating students to learn. Ashley said, “And I think that’s the REAL challenge in teaching, is motivating kids to want to learn and making them believe in themselves,” (p. 29). Mark expanded on this sentiment.

Um, I also believe that, um, when motivation is lacking or when motivation is a factor – that’s one of the main roles of the teacher then is to enhance learning motivation. Because you know, in a perfect world you would want kids to be INCREDIBLY curious and self-motivated. And you just leave them to their own devices, and they’re going to learn in this rich environment that, hopefully, you’ve put them in. But we all know that, um, that’s not necessarily the reality that we’re faced with. And some kids are in, uh, outside of the classroom, sometimes even in the classroom, are not in stimulating environments. Um – so whether you think yours is or not – part of the, um, role of a teacher I think is to, um, MAINTAIN the motivation and the stimulation in the children where it may be lacking. (p. 35)

Additionally, Ashley indicated that students need internal motivation. “I think real intelligence comes from and real – just success in academics comes from, um, a person finding their own motivation to learn,” (p. 29). However, Jocelyn insisted that teachers can motivate students to learn.

You know some of them [students] will be - They’ll come in with this great educational background and their parents are educated, and they have the support system, and you know, and they’ll – they’ll do well. And they’ll always do well in, you know, everything that they do, because they have that support and that knowledge and whatever. And then you have students that have very limited educational backgrounds when – even in fourth grade if they come, like say, from Mexico or something, but their parents didn’t have the means. Or they lived in a very rural area and they weren’t schooled or things like that, but you can MOTIVATE them to learn and you can. You know, it might just be – They might not make the gains as the next student next to them, but if they make some gain,

you know, that just always makes me feel good because they're capable of learning. (p. 18)

Whether believing that students should find their own motivation to learn or that teachers can motivate students to learn, these three teachers agree on the importance of motivation in learning.

Teacher expectations.

Either directly or indirectly, seven teacher participants expressed their expectations for students in the classroom: Lorna, Philip, Cecilia, Magdalena, Jocelyn, Corwin and Marissa. Philip, Lorna and Cecilia said they specify their expectations at the outset of the semester. For example, Philip declared, "I really state my expectations up front, and I enforce that expectation strictly the very, you know, first month or two or so forth," (p. 25). He and Jocelyn reported that they expect the best from students. Jocelyn maintained, "Um, I expect every child to do their best, ALWAYS," (p. 17). Meanwhile, Magdalena said she lets them know what she expects. "I put a lot of pressure – pressure on them, you know, on the students. I told them, 'This is your job. You must do it.' I mean, I don't gave the responsibility to the parents or to me," (p. 2). And Cecilia warned against lowering expectations, "if we lower our expectations, then they will lower their standards themselves," (p. 28). She also said,

'Excuse me? Writing a note? Like I don't – we're not in fourth grade to write notes back and forth to each other. You do that at recess or something, you know. And you know, there's times that I'm like, 'I'm not your friend. I might – You all might know a lot about me, but I'm your teacher, right'? So, they know, they know, but then when you have – 'cause sometimes I'm like, I'm not even that strict. It's just my expectation. I just expect certain things. (pp. 86-87)

Conversely, although teachers may have expectations of students, students' attitudes may also affect a teacher's expectations. Corwin revealed, "Some kids just have the attitude: They don't – they really don't care and they don't want to do anything. And it doesn't matter what we

do, they don't want to do it. And that's part of their attitude," (p. 44). Yet, Marissa's expectations appeared unrelenting, regardless of students' attitudes or learning needs.

And so, if, if – you know if they have a disability or if they're incredibly gifted, it doesn't mean that they can or can't do certain things. It just means that they have to – learn how to use more tools to get there. If they're special needs, then they need to learn how to use a computer, how to use Spell Check (laughs) and how to, you know, maybe get books or tapes or something rather than just sit there and say, 'Well, I can't because I have special needs,' you know, um. And if they're gifted, that still doesn't mean that they're going to succeed unless they have the study habits and learn how to use a computer and do certain things in order to get to where they want to get to. (p. 15)

Of the seven teachers who discussed teacher expectations, only one, Corwin, indicated that students' attitudes could influence his own expectations for student learning. Based on their statements, the others appear more determined on students meeting their expectations.

Teacher caring.

Seven teachers referenced teacher caring: Marissa, Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Lorna, Jocelyn, and Magdalena. Marissa said quietly, "I hug my kids a lot though, my students, and they know that I care a lot about them. I think that's important," (p. 28). Philip says, "I mean, these are like my kids, you know. They're just too important to me, um, to group them and clump them all together as being just one entity, so," (p. 31). He reiterated, "These students are like my kids, and I love all my kids tremendously," (p. 38).

Cecilia, Lorna and Jocelyn portrayed a similar concerned, thoughtful, and even familial outlook in their interactions with their students. Lorna explained:

Um – an aspect of where I come from as well is trying to see children through the eyes of the people who love them the most. If I do that, then I can't allow myself to short change a child, because I'm viewing the child through the eyes that I would view my own child. And even if I was tired or I didn't have time, or, um, the kid was being whiny or not their best self, if it were MY child, I would find a way – ALWAYS. And so what gives me the right to treat anyone's child any differently? (p. 57)

Cecilia reports she has a motherly aspect when she speaks to her students. “And she [Art teacher] tells me, ‘I love the way you talk to them....You’re just so like - like a mom but NOT a mom,’ ” (p. 86). Meanwhile, Jocelyn’s comment reflected her awareness of the role of her own background in using affectionate language with students.

I’m Hispanic, so it’s our nature to be that way, to be very, um, nurturing – very nurturing, very, um, to those students....And I hear other teachers do it, but I know I’m very aware of the fact that I do it – *mijo* [my son], *mija* [my daughter], I will tell them that. It’s a very – it’s a *carino*, [loving expression or act]. Um ... I don’t care if it’s a student in the – We have an English-only strand that’s being phased out, but they know what it means. They don’t speak Spanish but they know what it means. I’m like, ‘Mijo, should you be acting like that?’ ‘No’. ‘Okay, well, you know, don’t do that.’ (p. 65).

And Tim displayed a sense of caring in his statement regarding his students’ background and working at a dual language program school.

I guess, I enjoy it [working with this population] because, um, I think – ah - a lot of times the kids that we have at a school like ours don’t often, you know, don’t – they’re not – how do I say it? They’re not seen in the same light as they might be in another place per se, ahm. What they bring to the classroom experience or to schooling isn’t valued....So, I guess one of the things that ... we, ah, promote is linguistic diversity, um. Part of our mission statement is to develop, you know, well bilingualism, um, uh. And so it’s – it’s great for – I think, for kids to have this kind of experience, because I really feel like we prioritize kids,’ you know, self esteem and their self concept, and, and, uh, try to make kids feel, you know, great about, you know, coming from where they’re coming from. And I don’t think that’s always the case for a lot of kids. I think they wind up in places where, you know, what you bring to the classroom, you know, you gotta kind of leave that baggage at the door and this is what we’re all about in here. (pp. 7-8)

Meanwhile, Magdalena suggested caring moves in both directions.

This is their job, their classroom and they need to CARE this classroom and love this classroom. And many told me, ‘I don’t want to go any – I don’t want to go. I want to – ’ Sometimes when finish school they told me, ‘Do we need to go? Can we stay here?’ Sometime they told me that. (p. 25)

Magdalena indicates mutual caring between her and her students. Marissa said directly that she cared about her students. Phillip said he loved his. Lorna said she treated hers as if they were her

own children. Cecilia evidently talked to her students as if she were a mom. Jocelyn noted that she used affectionate terms with them and Tim said he sought to further students' self-esteem. These teachers' statements suggest an overall level of caring for their students that would likely permeate their classroom practices.

A safe classroom.

The majority of teachers agreed that safe classrooms are needed for student learning to occur - Philip, Tim, Lorna, Magdalena, Corwin and Mijael, specifically. Tim spoke for himself as well as represented the views of Mijael when he said "So, creating a safe place where kids can feel good about who they are and feel good about what they're able to do and – so that would be part of it [his teaching philosophy]," (p. 8). Moreover, Tim expounded, "I never put kids on the spot and say, 'You need to speak now, so we're going to wait here until you say something,' um," (p. 8). And Mijael affirmed, "I think they [students] need to be – feel like I said, included in an environment where they can take risks that if they mess up, no one's going to ridicule them," (p. 25).

Magdalena prioritized her students having a sense of belonging to the classroom. "That's the most important thing: that you need to make them feel they belong here," (p. 25). Philip wants the classroom to be the safest place of all for students. He maintained, "this room right here has GOT to be the safest place in the entire community," (p. 23). And again, "Uh-hmmm, and for me, it's always creating an environment that is the safest place in this entire community, even safer than their homes," (p.74). Lorna connected students feeling safe to teachers conducting themselves as "adults."

They're children, so they need an adult. And just because someone is of adult age does not always mean that they're an adult, in my opinion. And so, if you have an adult in the sense of the word that I mean working with a group of children, those children will be just fine. They'll feel secure, they'll feel safe, they'll feel

directed, they'll feel purposeful, um, they will learn how to – they will learn how to literally live or they will learn how to approach their learning and integrate that. (p. 62)

Art teacher Corwin seeks to create an artistic and expressive haven for students.

So, I think the whole idea here is to create some really, you know, nice, sweet place, an oasis from all of that and get them to have some sense of aesthetics and not base what they do on violence. I mean that's – that's kind of a losing battle, but it's worth fighting for. I mean we're trying to do and we're trying to create that kind of place. I mean, I play classical music in here. In the beginning, kids just think, 'What IS that noise?' And now in week three, they're very very calm with it, and they enjoy it, and, um, they're starting to understand that there are other options. I mean, not that anybody's modern music there's nothing wrong with it. I listen to it myself. But in the class, I'm trying to create a sense of calm and quiet, and with quicker music, you just don't – you don't get there with it. They get – it kinda gets them moving, kinda gets them going, and this other music – for some, it's boring and for others, they just really enjoy the calm nature of it. (pp. 33-34)

Participants' statements reflect a purposeful intention to create a safe learning space for student expression and learning. Like caring and respect for students, creating a safe space suggests a student-centered classroom.

Respect for students.

Teachers who addressed this topic include Mijael, Cecilia, Ashley, Corwin, Lorna, Philip, and Tim, seven of the eleven teachers. Students have to be respected, said Mijael: "their identity has to be respected, who they are," (p. 26). He extended that respect to confidentiality for students' possible immigration status.

It's not my job to ask or not, but if – you know, are they – what kind of – can I, you know, sometimes if they're – Are they undocumented?...to me that limits them in what they can participate or not ... Sometimes or sometimes just parents will tell me, and, you know, to me that's confidentiality. (p. 35)

He recalled cancelling a field trip to Alamogordo once because of a checkpoint there.

I know there was four or five students that said, 'We can't go; this is why.' ... so I cancelled the field trip ... it's not equitable. I'm not going to say, 'You can't go because of that,' so we did another field trip in town. (p. 35)

Cecilia conveyed a sense of respect for students when she described how she talks to them.

I literally will start talking like - about if that's how they are with their mother at home, and that's just MY way of teaching, you know, kind of like just a real human being. And I want them to know that we are just a regular person. I know that teachers can be intimidating and so – and I've had very good feedback with the kids. (p. 3)

And Tim reflected respect for his students in his discussion of creating an environment that he characterized as “empowering.” “And I think, it [moving around the room and engaging students while they work] kind of also creates an environment within which, you know, kids feel empowered, um,” (p. 17). That respect is violated suggested Ashley when students’ scores take precedence to students.

Children are not, you know factories. Schools aren't factories. And we can't track our – We cannot track our, you know, our efficiency and our safety ratings and all that based on these little points of what they KEEP SAYING are just indicators. Indicators that literally determine a child's life! (p. 33)

She elaborated on students’ interests being subsumed to assessment processes.

And if they show up to school every day because they love school, ‘cause school is a place they go and they feel good about it. And they're not constantly being, you know, forced to sit in front of a computer screen and answer questions in a language they don't even understand. Or, you know, on things they've never studied and their recess is not taken away ‘cause they don't read enough words a minute. And if they're allowed to really enjoy their learning on some level and people believe in them. And they're not constantly being degraded and made to feel less than they are because they don't do well on X assessment, then, you know, if they show up and they don't drop out, they're going to learn something. And they're going to be able to contribute to society, which is think is the goal of school. (p. 72)

Meanwhile, inherent in Philip's comment on learning from his students is respect for their understanding. “And, again, the whole collaborative thing comes in that they teach me about my lack of understanding, sometimes, or my assumptions,” (p. 37). And Corwin related respect for a student's person to art.

So, it's taken a year to really build up their [students'] understanding that, number one, they do have abilities; number two, everyone doesn't do it the same and what you do is beautiful....And so to get them to the point to understand that they have the capacity to draw, and to paint, and to sculpt and to weave, it's really – it's a huge – It's a big relief for them, you know, and a giant boost to their understanding about their own abilities, which in turn boosts their confidence, but it's built over time. (pp. 5-6)

And Lorna reflected on teacher power versus student power.

They walk into a situation where they don't have the most power. They should be helped to realize that they do have power, but they're – they're at a different place. As they walk in the door, you're the teacher, you're the adult, and in their eyes, you're the person who they want to please. (p. 55)

In addition, she conceived of teacher-student relationships as “sacred.”

Every time you meet a student and you welcome them into the space that you try to create for them to learn in, you are entering into this relationship that's full of trust and hope and expectation on both parts, um, but mostly on the child's part.Um – you're that figure, who's going to take care of them, and guide them, and support them. You're the person, who they have to go to during the day, and during the school year that represents – that relationship represents the majority of their waking hours, and so for me, it's a very sacred relationship. (pp. 55-56)

Similarly, Philip viewed teacher-student relationships as consisting of mutual sharing, trust and respect.

And so sharing a lot about myself opens the door for them to share about them. Because if I'm closed off and I never am willing to share anything about me or my family, or, you know, my experiences, they're not likely. And this has been my experience; they're not likely to want to share with me either, because then it becomes an issue of trust and respect. (p. 23)

Among the ways in which participants described respect for students are honoring confidentiality, nurturing their relationship, and recognizing the power differential between them.

An environment for success.

Seven teachers expressed the concept that schools and classrooms exist to create opportunities for students to be successful. Ashley believes that public schools are designed to help students become successful citizens in life.

Public school is to equip people to be able to be successful in society and take care of themselves and be good citizens and contribute to society. I think that's - the goal of public school, to give everyone that equal opportunity. (pp. 72-73)

Tim represented several of the dual language teachers, including Mark and Cecilia, when he expressed his intention to 'create opportunities' for students to be successful.

And so, I mean, part of my philosophy is, you know, striving to create opportunities for kids who don't - who aren't - who don't always have those opportunities and who, you know, leaving school - you know what I mean - might not have the same opportunities. (p. 8)

Philip detailed how he creates situations for students to be successful.

so, I see it as my job to set some of the students up to be successful. So, when we are having conversations or they're - they're collaborating on a project or they're collaborating on an answer, um, to an essay question or what not, I will talk to the students and prep them a little bit and get their insights on this. And I'll even, uh, have them dictate to me if they're having a difficult time getting their ideas down on paper and I'll say, 'You know what? When it's time to present to the whole class, I want you to be ready to do this.'

So, that gives them an opportunity as I continue to wander around, to rehearse by themselves, to prepare themselves so when it comes time to - to engage in the classroom discussion, they're the ones that I'm going to select, and they've already been prepared for that. So, it really sets them up to be successful in the eyes of their peers, and everybody else starts to see that, 'You know what? We all know just a little bit more.' So, that's how I try to engage that. (p. 75)

However, Mijael regarded a relaxed and positive environment as contributing to successful learning.

I think one of my strengths as a teacher is that I create a - I think I create a positive learning environment and like, you know, every year they say, 'God, you got a really mellow class.' It's like, 'Well then I get one every year you know.' So there has to be something there, but it's just like, you know, 'Let's relax, let's do our work.' (p. 24)

Philip exemplified how he encourages students to see themselves as successful.

You know, they have these famous people all around us. 'They were in fifth grade at one point in time.' And they kind of forget that. 'So why can't you be the next president? Why can't you be the next Leonardo De Vinci?' And they're like -

'Me?' I'm like, 'Why not, you know.' ... you know, we talk about freeing the person. (p. 67)

But, he says, students doubt their own abilities.

They've already kind of put these shackles on themselves that they can't be more than this. And the minute you start telling them that they can, it's almost like, 'Are you okay? Are you sleep deprived Mr. [name]? Are you dreaming? Because I can't do those things.' And my question's always, 'Why not?' (p. 67)

Meanwhile, Marissa one summer extended the classroom in order that her students, along with her children, might enjoy educationally-enriching experiences.

I got a van that year, just for them [students], and I would pick them up on weekends. Yeah, my own van. I had to buy a van. I had to, to pick them up on weekends and take them out with my own kids. I have two kids....And when I would take them to the museum, I would go pick up some of my students to go with me to the museum. When I would take them to the zoo, I would pick up some of my students and take them to the zoo, because they were – besides being a very low class, they were socioeconomically low. They didn't have a lot of opportunities to go places, and um, I guess I – I took them everywhere that year. (pp. 24-25)

In addition to providing opportunities to learn, like Marissa, participants appear to value student learning in such a way that students see themselves as successful. Encouraging a positive self-view would, as some of the teachers' other reported values, likely contribute to student engagement.

Value of knowing one's students.

Three of the eleven teachers, Mijael, Philip and Lorna, expressed the value of knowing students personally, but for different reasons. Mijael said it shows interest in the student as individual.

I would say this is part of my philosophy, is that I try to REALLY get to know each student, um, and I think that I'm successful in that. I get invited to a lot of family events, and I make it a point if I can to attend them. I think that shows the parents that you're interested in their child's family outside of school – baptisms, *quincineras*, [15-year-old coming out birthday parties], birthday parties, you know. And I go and I show respect by showing up, and I don't stay

long and I – but you know, but I think kids remember that, so ... You want to get involved in your student, you know, in your students, but then you don't you know, you just - just enough to know 'That you know what? He's my teacher, but he cares about me, too.' And leave it at that. You know what I'm saying? It's not – 'Cause they know, and then you do have to set, you know, your boundaries with parents, 'cause sometimes, you know, they can get, you know, they can feel like, 'Oh, you're my friend and this and that.' And I try to say, 'You know, I'm your child's teacher...I would love to become friends, but when your child is not in my class anymore because it's a conflict of interest. I'm not – I'm still your child's teacher and I need to teach them and hold them accountable if he gets out of hand.' (pp. 26-27)

Philip reported using the knowledge gained to inform his instruction.

Okay, I believe it's really - for me, it's very, uh, important – it's CRITICAL even, that I get to know my students personally, um. And by getting to know them personally, um, it really provides me a great deal of insight as to how they learn best. What their, uh, strengths and their challenges are. (p. 17)

One way he said he gains knowledge is through his daily class conversations.

but I always make it a point that I begin my day, um, by just having a conversation with them....I try to make myself aware of what's happening within the community that my kids live in, and so I will talk to the kids. 'Hey did anybody, you know, see the play at the South Broadway Cultural Center, you know.'...So, just engage them in a little conversation. 'Oh, what else did you do this weekend?' You know, and so they begin to say, 'Oh, I went to see my dad, and he just got out of jail.' I'm like, 'Oh, that must be fantastic for you.' 'Yeah, you know.' And you know, you're recording these things, and just by looking at their demeanor again really kind of clues you in as to how are they going to be with you today. (pp. 34-35).

Lorna related knowing students to the art of teaching.

And so, that's where teaching becomes an art. You could be very scientific about how you're setting it up and how you're planning and so on and so forth, but the art comes in the subtle shades between, you know, this is what's going on or that's what's going on, or this child needs a little bit of this or that, and it's different. It's just – it's a case, by case, by case, by case level. A case by case, um, situation and, um. It's just really getting to know the kids and listening to them, really listening, and listening in different ways – listening to what they say, listening to what they don't say, listening to what – how they look, say and so, it's – it's complicated sometimes. (pp. 32-33)

The approaches teachers described to know their students better included classroom conversations, family events and the “art” of teaching.

Pragmatism.

Three teachers, Mark, Lorna and Corwin, discussed three different aspects that they judged as impacting their teaching. Those aspects are the perceived need to choose one’s role in the ‘new curricular system,’ the realities of teaching in a classroom of 25 or more students, and the recognition of, and perhaps resignation to, the awareness that one cannot help all the students one teaches.

Corwin discussed the perceived constraints in working with 380 students a week. He disclosed those constraints first, in terms of energy, and, second, in terms of the "problems" that he observes students to have and his ability to impact them. His energy level has limits, he admitted.

Working with 380 kids a week is really pretty taxing, and so I have to decide where I want to try to expend the most amount of energy, and sometimes, it won’t be for things that I know are valuable, but I just – I know at this point in my career that I can’t do it. (p. 37)

Sometimes students’ issues appear larger than his ability to assist them.

I realize now working with 380 kids a week is I can’t change a lot of those – those bigger issues with individual kids. And for me, it’s kind of triage. I take care of the ones that I can and the ones that I know – after this many years, I kind of have a sense – the ones that I know are not going to really put the effort in or their – the problems are too big.

Then - I – for me, they just come to art, and as long as they are not disruptive, I’ll try to help them. But if, they’re at least relaxed in here, then, I guess it’s ok. The other ones and – and – ultimately, I want everyone to do well and to gain skills. But some kids, you know, I can’t save the world. (pp. 44-45)

Lorna elaborated on the difference between teaching in an ideal manner and in a more realistic one.

Um, in teaching, the best thing to do is to always work with a student to form EVERY single aspect of their learning....the BEST way, the optimal way, would be to say, 'Let's brainstorm for, in each of these different areas, what you're interested in learning and different ways that we could achieve these standards. And then within each of those areas, after coming up with the list of different things that we're interested in studying, we could go into each and every single one and create rubrics together, um. And then we could study the units that we brainstormed for together, and we could go out and look for the resources together with the kids helping. The more the kids are involved in EVERY single step of their learning, the more competent they become, the more independent they become, but then there's reality, and we have a certain amount of time.

We have 25 students, we have other activities going on around us. We have limitations that are a result of family situations or just different things that come up that interrupt your days....So in reality what happens is that a teacher has to, I have to organize some of their learning, and then as much as possible, I have to give them opportunities to do what I've just described. And, um, I cannot – It is impossible for me to do that with every single subject for every single lesson. It just can't happen, and so what I do is I intentionally, um, plan for them to have experiences like that as much as I am able. (pp. 24-26)

Later in the interview, she again addressed this topic.

That's that whole thing I was talking about ... what would be optimal in the world if you had maybe just three or four students to work with. And then there's what's feasible, what works. And so I, you know, I've taken all the theory classes too, and there's theory and then there's reality of what you can do. There's a poem by Maya Angelou that speaks to that. That you need to know what you can do in a day, a week, a month, a year, and in teaching that's very, very, uh, valid. You just – you need to know what you can do and what you can't do. (pp. 39-40)

Meanwhile, Mark claimed that teachers have to choose the type of position they will adopt in “the new system.” “Um, you're on your own in terms of, um, trying to choose or decide what role you're going to play in this new system [out-of-box curricula] that's being imposed on education,” (p. 21). He continued, “Comply minimally and then comply to the extent that you have to. Right, to keep yourself in the classroom, but then do the right thing after that, right,” (p. 23). That role has implications, he suggested, for students' assessment scores and apparent learning gains.

some teachers who actually do that [give an assessment before teaching the content knowledge] when that is not the best thing to do for them, for the school, for their kids, unless part of, um, what you're trying to undermine is – unless you're trying to give your kids the lowest score possible so that when test them during the winter, um, testing widow there's SUCH a wide – a – huge gains that that's what your purpose is. So, that's another way of doing it. Give it at the beginning of the testing window when you know they're going to have worse scores, um, so that you can show more gains. So, there's a lot of manipulation of the process that can go on there. (p. 29)

Participants' statements suggest that despite or along with their teaching goals and values, the realities of day-to-day teaching impact them and affect how they teach in the classroom.

Domain summary.

In conclusion, teachers responded to the request for their teaching philosophies with 12 pedagogical features, or themes. These 12 themes reflect four broad areas: instruction, student learning, teacher characteristics and environment.

Instruction includes teaching content and skills plus pragmatism. Student learning encompasses student learning, learning accountability and motivation. Teacher characteristics consists of teacher expectations; teacher caring; respect for students; value of knowing one's students; and altruistic goals. And environment contains an environment for success and a safe classroom.

The 12 themes that 11 teachers addressed in their teaching philosophies are as follows with the number of teachers who discussed each theme noted in parentheses: 1) altruistic goals (4); 2) the teaching of content and skills (5), which includes education beyond the classroom (2) and all students can learn (2); 3) student learning, which includes constructivism (5), prioritizing student thinking (5) and life-long learning (2); 4) learning accountability (6); 5) motivation (3); 6) teacher expectations (6); 7) teacher caring (7); 8) a safe classroom (6); 9) respect for students

(6); 10) an environment for success (6); 11) the value of knowing one's students (2); and 12) pragmatism (3). These results are illustrated in the table directly below.

Table 3. Teaching Philosophy: Themes and responding teachers

Theme	Number of Responding Teachers	Names of Teachers
Altruistic goals Teaching beyond the classroom	2	Marissa and Magdalena ---
All students can learn	2	Jocelyn and Mijael
Teaching content and skills	5	Lorna, Marissa, Cecilia, Magdalena and Corwin
Student learning Learning as constructivism	6	Ashley, Mark, Lorna, Tim, Philip and Magdalena --
Prioritizing student thinking	6	Lorna, Philip, Tim, Ashley, Mark and Corwin --
Life-long learning	2	Mark and Philip
Learning accountability	6	Tim, Philip, Lorna, Magdalena, Mijael and Cecilia
Motivation	3	Ashley, Mark and Jocelyn
Teacher expectations	7	Philip, Cecilia, Lorna, Magdalena, Jocelyn, Corwin and Marissa
Teacher caring	7	Marissa, Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Lorna, Jocelyn and Magdalena
A safe classroom	6	Tim, Philip, Lorna, Magdalena, Corwin and Mijael
Respect for a students	7	Mijael, Cecilia, Ashley, Corwin, Lorna, Philip and Tim
An environment for success	7	Ashley, Tim, Philip, Mijael, Mark, Marissa and Cecilia
Value of knowing one's students	3	Mijael, Philip and Lorna
Pragmatism	3	Mark, Lorna and Corwin

Analysis

Participants' statements on their teaching philosophies are reviewed to consider their reported perceptions of what they said related to incorporating student culture within their

classroom assessment practice. In addition, some teachers referred to students as individuals and a few teachers displayed indicators of emotion through their words, those are considered here. I begin my interpretation of teachers' philosophy by examining their comments on culture, then their references on individuality and emotions.

To consider how teachers may have conceptualized culture in their teaching philosophies, it is necessary to first know their reported definitions of culture. Therefore, although a discussion of culture is presented more fully in Chapter 8, in order to provide a foundation for reflecting on how teachers may have considered culture, their characterizations of culture and student culture are introduced here.

To ascertain just how participants conceived of culture, I asked them to define both culture and student culture. My original idea was that their conceptions of culture would color any adaptations to classroom assessment they might make based upon cultural considerations. Their definitions of culture and student culture were virtually the same; they identified culture as including the characteristics of family background, parental education, family values, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. These characteristics are used throughout to examine how teachers may have perceived culture to permeate their pedagogy. Poverty and opportunity to learn – related to socioeconomic status – and parental education – included in family culture - contribute to the "large performance gap between ELL [English language learners] and non-ELL students" on large-scale standardized tests (Abedi & Gandara, 2006, p. 39). The cultural features teachers selected coincided almost exactly with those of Abedi and Gandara (2006) suggesting that teachers were on track with identifying particular cultural characteristics upon which to focus to improve student learning.

Teachers' References to Cultural Characteristics

Family background.

Again and again, Philip alluded to students' perceptions, or background, in his philosophy. For example, he said, "this room right here has GOT to be the safest place in the entire community," (p. 23). That the room has to be safer than the entire community calls to mind a reality that for some, lives away from school may not have been pleasant, or safe, and that classrooms may have been akin to harbors for students to enter and feel safe, protected, steady and secure. When he described conversing with students, he demonstrated not just knowledge of students' home lives, but that he supported them in the midst of those conditions:

So, just engage them in a little conversation. 'Oh, what else did you do this weekend?' ... and so they begin to say, 'Oh, I went to see my dad, and he just got out of jail.' I'm like, 'Oh, that must be fantastic for you.' (pp. 34-35)

He offered no commentary on the dad having been in jail, only empathy for the student who was able to see the dad. In addition, when he described attempts to encourage students to expand their life visions, he said, "They've already kind of put these shackles on themselves that they can't be more than this..., 'Are you sleep deprived Because I can't do those things,' " (p. 67). To be cognizant of a student-"shackled" perspective rather than one filled with dreams of possible futures, options and prospects is to be aware of students' beliefs. Beliefs are an attribute, like ethnicity and language, often associated with values and culture. To be aware of them indicates he had a familiarity with his students' background and, therefore, culture. He went on and described opportunities he said he crafted so students would see themselves as successful, especially, in front of their peers.

In addition, Philip, like Mijael, described efforts to know his students. Philip said he intended to use that information to inform instruction, and that could possibly include

assessment. Mijael described various incidents wherein he indicated that he either learned, or already knew, about students and their background. For example, he recounted cancelling a trip to a particular town and modifying the destination because some students were reportedly undocumented Mexican immigrants. This teacher appeared to have conscientiously attended to his students' background, or culture. Plus, Mijael related that he attended student family events in order to show his interest in students. Like Philip, his statements demonstrated that knowing his students was important to him and, plus, he acted on that information. Like Marissa, Mijael said he took his commitment to his students outside the classroom.

Also revealing knowledge of students' families' backgrounds were Magdalena's and Jocelyn's statements. Magdalena said, "Because sometime many families, half of my class they don't have education and they cannot help them at home," (p.2). Similarly, Jocelyn said,

They'll [some students] come in with this great educational background and their parents are education, and they have the support system, and you know ... they'll do well....And then you have students that have very limited educational backgrounds ... from Mexico or something, but their parents didn't have the means. Or they lived in a very rural area. (p. 18)

Tim indicated that he recognized and appreciated student background and language when he said,

the kids that we have at a school like ours don't often, you know, don't - they're not - how do I say it? They're not seen in the same light as they might be in another place per se, ahm. What they bring to the classroom experience or to schooling isn't valued...Part of our mission statement is to develop ... bilingualism....and try to make kids feel ... great about ... coming from where they're coming from. (pp. 7-8)

"What they bring" and "where they're coming from" to the classroom experience is their background or culture. Tim also referenced the school's mission to develop bilingualism, and language is related to culture.

Teachers, generally, defined student culture as being part of their family's culture. A possibly relatively unsafe external environment, a family's undocumented immigrant status, a father in jail, parents' level of education and "whatever students bring with them" all may be interpreted as relating to students' background. As such, I interpret these 5 teachers' statements as having demonstrated that they perceived and attended to student culture.

Socioeconomic level.

Marissa showed awareness of her students' socioeconomic level and accommodation for it when she said she bought a van to take some students on summer field trips with her children.

I would pick up some of my students and take them to the zoo, because they were - besides being a very low class, they were socioeconomically low. They didn't have a lot of opportunities to go places, and, um, I guess I - I took them everywhere that year. (pp. 24-25)

Marissa was among the teachers who identified teacher caring as a part of her pedagogy.

Ethnicity.

Jocelyn expressed awareness of applying her own Hispanic culture to her teaching when she said, "I'm Hispanic, so it's our nature to be that way, to be very, um, nurturing - very nurturing, very, um, to those students," (p. 65).

Individual

Teachers' discussions of their students' individuality is examined because teachers said they attempted to develop meaningful classroom assessment and instruction to address the needs of the individual learner. I construe the pedagogical philosophies of Lorna, Mijael, Philip, Corwin and Jocelyn to support their consideration of students as individuals. Lorna addressed the concept of the individual four times. Once was when she discussed teaching content, the standards and "trying to see each child and see how to help" (p. 56) him or her. "Each child" denotes the child as individual. Second was her statement on caring:

an aspect of where I come from is trying to see children through the eyes of the people who love them the most. If I do that, then I can't allow myself to short change a child because I'm viewing the child through the eyes that I would view my own child. (p. 57)

Her reference to viewing "children through the eyes of the people who love them the most" suggested an outlook of the student on a personal basis because each parent would know and love his, or her, own child individually. Again, when she related knowing students to the art of teaching, she said, "it's a case, by case, by case, by case level....really getting to know the kids and listening to them, really listening," (pp. 32-33). "Case by case" is akin to one by one. And later in describing teaching in an ideal manner, she said she would work with "a student to form EVERY single aspect of their learning," (pp. 24-26). To work with "each child" on "EVERY single aspect of their learning" is to identify a student's particular interests, or needs, and, subsequently, craft knowledge and skills to be learned around them.

Two teachers, Mijael and Philip, said they took time to know their students. Mijael said, "I try to REALLY get to know each student," (p. 26). Similarly, Philip reported, "it's CRITICAL even, that I get to know my students personally," (p. 17). Getting to know each student and knowing one's students personally amount to knowing them as individuals.

Additionally, Corwin twice indicated regard for the individual in art. Once was when he spoke about students gradually developing the understanding that they "do have abilities; number two, everyone doesn't do it the same and what you do is beautiful," (pp. 5-6). That "everyone doesn't do it the same" suggests that he expected students to view and create art differently. The second was when he said, "I don't want them ... to come to a particular view of a piece. I want them to HAVE a view," (p. 15). Wanting students "to have a view" suggests he wanted them to develop their own unique, or individual, perspective.

Finally, Jocelyn portrayed respect for individual learning needs when she said, "Every child is capable of learning....They might not all be able to convey their knowledge in the same way. They may not all be able to write down what they learn, but they can tell me," (p. 18). Her giving students who could not write the option to "tell" her their knowledge instead indicates that she assessed students who could not write differently than those who could. That is, she revealed that based upon student needs, she accommodated at least, some assessments for some students based upon what she perceived they needed. Therefore, she seemed to accommodate student culture within her classroom assessment by having allowed students to shape their responses based upon her perception of their needs. Similarly, she was one of three teachers who identified the importance of teachers motivating student learning and one of seven who identified caring as part of her teaching approach.

Emotions

Occasionally, teachers evinced their thoughts, beliefs, values or practices with what I perceived as emotion. For example, when discussing her perception of her school administrations' regard for test scores, Ashley verbally expressed some energy around the idea that children and schools are "not factories" and that scores can "determine a child's life!"

Children are not, you know factories. Schools aren't factories. And we can't track our – We cannot track our, you know, our efficiency and our safety ratings and all that based on these little points of what they KEEP SAYING are just indicators. Indicators that literally determine a child's life! (p. 33)

Additionally, when discussing her perspective that students were subjected to assessments in non-understandable languages, deprived of enjoyable learning and "degraded" on assessments in the course of learning to contribute to society, she, again, expressed some emotion.

And if they show up to school every day because they love school, 'cause school is a place they go and they feel good about it. And they're not constantly being, you know, forced to sit in front of a computer screen and answer questions in a

language they don't even understand. Or, you know, on things they've never studied and their recess is not taken away 'cause they don't read enough words a minute. And if they're allowed to really enjoy their learning on some level and people believe in them. And they're not constantly being degraded and made to feel less than they are because they don't do well on X assessment, then, you know, if they show up and they don't drop out, they're going to learn something. And they're going to be able to contribute to society, which is think is the goal of school. (p. 72)

Not unlike Ashley's statement was Mark's comment opposing teachers' having assessed student learning without first having instructed students on related content.

unless part of, um, what you're trying to undermine is – unless you're trying to give your kids the lowest score possible so that when test them during the winter, um, testing widow there's SUCH a wide – a – huge gains that that's what your purpose is. So, that's another way of doing it. Give it at the beginning of the testing window when you know they're going to have worse scores, um, so that you can show more gains. So, there's a lot of manipulation of the process that can go on there, so (p. 29)

Although only three teachers displayed what I perceived as emotion, whether anger or resentment or something else, I interpret that energy to indicate a level of personal engagement with their students, the process and/or assessment. If so, the question arises how that level of engagement may affect their teaching and conduct. Teachers appeared to strongly support their students and their learning.

Summary

Based on the characteristics included in participants' definitions of culture and student culture elaborated on within Chapter 8, my interpretation is that six teachers expressed philosophical statements related to student culture. They did so by viewing culture, primarily in terms of student background, socioeconomic status and ethnicity. As a group, these teachers' statements suggested that not only were they oriented toward students' learning, they were also, particularly, attuned to their backgrounds and how their backgrounds may affect their learning. In addition, participants may have possibly accommodated student culture when they

accommodated students' individual needs. However, more information is needed on what teachers include when they consider students' individual needs.

Chapter 5

Standardized Assessment

Results

Well, there's a test on the standards-based test back in March. They were asking kids about - they gave their own culturally sort of relevant, uh, myth....Anyways, they're talking about in Mexico there's a raton, a little mouse who comes and takes teeth when kids lose their teeth, right? ... and then in the end one of the questions was like, 'What other stories might you know that might explain what happens to kids' teeth when they fall out.' So my kids were looking at me like - you know what I mean? ... like when I grew up and my tooth fell out, I knew the tooth fairy. I didn't know anything about what happened anywhere else around the world because it wasn't...it wasn't my context....They wanted kids to talk about the tooth fairy. I was like, 'Well, no! These kids don't know the tooth fairy because that's not their experience. I don't tell them about the tooth fairy. I don't deal with their lost teeth.....Tim (pp. 30-31)

Introduction

Standardized assessment was not originally part of the interview questions, it developed as a domain largely as a result of teachers frequently and, at times, at length giving the topic voice during the interviews. Teachers often referred to standardized assessment in the course of discussing classroom assessments and scripted curricular assessments. During the interview process, as the possible import of standardized assessments on teachers' consciousness began to manifest, I began to generate inquiries, but not in the first interview.

Because standardized assessments appeared to constitute a large part of teachers' time, energy and perceptions, as well as, in some instances, precipitate emotional reactions, I concluded that standardized assessment had to be included as a part of the research findings. Part of this domain's importance lies in its contextual nature. The milieu of standardized assessments, often high stakes in themselves, and their potential impact on the student, teacher, classroom and school appear to be significant, based upon teachers' narratives. Together with teachers' teaching philosophies, standardized assessments comprise a major part of their world in the classroom,

instructionally, and, apparently sometimes, personally. Part of the importance of standardized assessments lies in its effects, reportedly, upon both students and teachers.

Classroom assessment, a separate domain, is discussed here only as it pertains to standardized assessment. Classroom assessment is defined as assessment of teaching and learning in the classroom. Standardized assessment is defined as assessments for which all the administration, scoring and uses of the test are alike (Linn, 1993, p. 340).

When teachers talk about assessment in this current, NCLB-fueled accountability climate, they inevitably talk about large-scale standardized testing along with the scripted assessments that come as part of their curricular materials. And since these curricular materials were often acquired in response to a district's desire to raise the large-scale test scores, the teachers appear to 'blame' NCLB for all required assessment. They also tend to lump the scripted, the large-scale and even the interim assessments compelled by districts into the same category of 'someone outside my classroom has dictated that my students be assessed with these instruments.'

During the interviews, classroom and standardized assessments were defined for teachers as follows. I defined classroom assessment as assessment of learning in the classroom that is typically constructed by a teacher in the classroom. And I defined standardized assessment as assessment that is uniformly given or administered, taken and scored. An example would be the state standards-based assessment. Although I did not intend to discuss standardized assessment, I chose to define it in order to distinguish it from classroom assessment. My purpose in providing definitions was to facilitate similar conceptions of assessments in order that the terms would, hopefully, pertain to the same types of constructs, instruments and related practices, and, consequently, support comparisons as appropriate.

The Role of Standardized Assessments

The themes arising in standardized assessment are 1) effects on the curriculum, 2) effects on dual language students and 3) modifications. Modifications developed as a result of my question as to whether teachers modified state and district standardized assessments.

Effects on the curriculum.

Teachers indicated that standardized assessments affect the curriculum in the following ways: 1) the amount of time allocated to assessment, 2) the timing of standardized assessments, and 3) teaching of the standards with its' own set of effects. These reportedly result in: 1) restricting the curriculum, 2) teaching to the test, and 3) effects on one's own classroom practices.

Amount of time allocated to assessment.

Five teachers addressed the amount of time that they spend administering standardized assessments. Two teachers' statements, Marissa's and Lorna's, were brief. For example, Marissa said: "We do tests [state standards-based standardized assessments] for a whole month, um, like everyone else," (p. 39). However, three teachers, Ashley, Cecilia, and Tim, conversed often and at length about standardized assessments.

For example, early in the interview, Ashley, like Tim and Cecilia, said: "and there's so much of our time given to that, just days, and days and days given to assessment," (p. 5). Later in the interview, she detailed the assessments she administers. Although her comments are similar in nature to those of Cecilia's, (first quote below), her complete statement is presented because Cecilia and Ashley teach in separate school districts and the two statements reveal a similar sentiment across districts. Cecilia said:

And you know that – it's just that those little sign-up assessments are very overwhelming... March – February, March, April. This is our life. The kids have

the ... the [state] standards based assessment for three weeks, then they had the [state English language proficiency test]. That's their English proficiency, um, from the state as well, then, they had the [district test]. Um, and then the last one, they were – had to be given a reading assessment in the [other district tests]. All that was going on in a matter of a two-month period. And that's not *even* talking a Math unit assessment That's not including any of that. That's including the 'have to.' So, it's very overwhelming, very. (pp. 30-31)

Ashley stated:

Just the state assessment by itself takes a month of curriculum time. We give them, uh, something called DIBELS [Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills], weekly progress monitoring in English and in Spanish. That take – I have to individually assess each child. They read a text; we count how many words per minute they read. And that has to be done individually, so I have to do that with every child in my classroom in English and in Spanish once a week.

Then, I have, uh, something called MAPS testing that's done on the computer that we do quarterly. But they're tested in every area of the curriculum, so it takes about four weeks to complete the assessment, total, and that takes two hours per time they go to do that assessment. And my entire curriculum has to be stopped, whatever I'm teaching is over, and then I have to take them to the Computer Lab and they take the test and they do that. It takes four weeks for them to complete one cycle of the testing, and I have to do that three times a year.

And then I have something called the, uh, Reading Core Story Test that I have to give. That's every seven days that I have to give that test, and that one is probably the most accurate... And then I have to give, um, a phonics test at the end of every reading assessment every seven days in addition to that. It's like a spelling test sort of, and I do a phonics screening test twice a year, um, in English and in Spanish to see how their phonics skills are. And I have to give something called a Theme Skills Test, which is about 10 one-page tests at the end of every three stories, every theme, and that takes quite a lot of time.

I have to give a Math, um, unit test. I have to give a Math chapter test and a Math unit test. The unit test is given at the end of each quarter, but it takes – It's enormous, and it takes children probably five days of my Math time to complete that test in class, the whole one-hour Math period. So, it takes about five hours for children to complete that test, and I have to do that quarterly.Then, that's a week of Math instruction that they miss every quarter, so that's four weeks of Math instruction that – of hands on or any kind of Math instruction that they miss just so that we can assess. And that's, we've been told, uh, required by the government because we're a Title I school, so we have to supply quarterly data as a district. (pp. 7-9)

Timing of standardized assessments.

Three teachers, Tim, Ashley and Mark, raised the topic of when standardized assessments are administered: prior to instruction. Tim revealed: “And so, you know, there’s a lot of testing that occurs, that comes - that’s kind of mandatory testing that’s not always reflective of what’s happening in the classroom that you do because you have to do it,” (p. 4). And Mark said: “So, because the assessment doesn’t match what the teacher actually taught in the classroom,” (p. 17). Ashley, who teaches in a different district, indicated that the practice of assessing prior to teaching is district-wide:

So, I start giving that test WAY BEFORE the end of the quarter when I haven’t EVEN taught yet on those things, because there’s a deadline of the date that that has to be – I have to turn that in to the district and my principal’s office. Yes, right. And everyone in our district does, because we have deadlines that we have to turn it in, and since it takes so long for the children to complete it – five days at least five days – um. (pp. 8-9)

Mark, alone, divulged that he takes action when he can to either test in English or to delay administration of the assessment until students have had the opportunity to learn the material.

We are told sometimes that kids, um, have to be tested in English even though we know that that’s not the correct language that they – in order to get the best results and the higher test scores which No Child Left Behind is asking us. And, uh, I’ve put my foot down several times and refused to administer it to them in English. (p. 25)

He continued:

....or you can circumvent the schedules, the assessment schedules. Don’t give them when they tell you to, um... I mean there’s a lot of things you can do short of sitting down and – you know, you can’t help kids with, uh, tests at all, uh. But there’s a lot of things that you can do as a teacher to make sure that when the testing time is appropriate, you know, despite what it might say despite what you might, you know, be told.

Okay, there’s a - there’s a two or something-month window of – a testing window for [the district assessment]. When the window opens, there’s a lot of instructional coaches and administrators who tell you to give the test as soon as possible. You don’t!

You wait till the very end of the window when your kids have more weeks behind them and you've had more, more opportunities to expose them to the things that are going to be on that test. So, um, right there you're not complying with the administrative mandate, however, what you're doing is perfectly legal (pp. 27-28)

But, despite disagreeing on the timing of administering standardized assessments, he, nevertheless, admitted to conforming to administrative policy.

I complied to keep my job. Um, non-compliance would be not administering the standardized tests. You might get fired over that. Um, we've discussed it, openly discussed it here at the school, and most people, including me, have backed down, uh, in the face of that. So, I believe that you have to comply because you – the work that you do to promote public education in the United States and maybe elsewhere you have to do from *within* the system. And that is the most effective place to do it – from the belly of the beast. (p. 24)

Teaching of the standards results in: a curtailed curriculum.

Four teachers maintained that as a result of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), they not only have to focus on teaching the standards, but the curriculum is constrained to favor instructional time on standards-related subjects likely to appear on the state-and/or district-mandated standards-based assessments. Mark said,

And by having LIMITED assessments, assessments that are limited to a certain spectrum of knowledge, you're limiting what's taught in the classroom. So, it SEVERELY narrows the curriculum, thereby doing EXTREME damage to, um, the education of individual children (pp. 86-87)

Philip and Jocelyn expressed concern about Science and Social Studies being omitted from the curriculum. Philip exclaimed: "I believe! I mean, if you go across the [district], you're going to find that Science and Social Studies is being cut left and right," (p. 7). Jocelyn also noted the amount of time that she is required to teach standardized assessment-related subjects: "But as a district you were told, um, our literacy block is 120 minutes and Math has to be 90 minutes of the day," (p. 86).

Meanwhile, Corwin lamented the omission of Art from the curriculum: “and what No Child Left Behind has done for programs like Art is – it’s extinguished Art, because everyone is trying to achieve those unattainable goals,” (p. 41). Mark, especially, regretted the omission of Social Studies from the curriculum.

[the district] only tests Math and Reading, which is also our standardized test; only does Math and Reading and now Science, um, which sends the message VERY directly that with [the district test], Science and Social Studies, Music, Art and everything else do NOT count in your educational development....It sends a message that Social Studies, mainly History, um does not count in your, um, academic, uh, development....Social Studies is probably the most egregious, uh, omission. And all this because it’s in Social Studies where you would learn about resistance movements like the type that is – is currently mounted and needs to be mounted even with more force to overthrow No Child Left Behind and the punitive, uh, nature of it and the DAMAGE that it’s doing to public education.

But these two things go hand in hand. And this is not a conspiracy theory. Social Studies is left out of the standardized testing to discourage teachers from teaching Social – If you don’t teach Social Studies in [the district] this year, NOBODY will notice. NO ONE will notice. Doesn’t even show up on ANYONE’S radar, but as you look around the classroom here and see some important dates on our timeline here that were allYou LEARN that as Citizenship and Social Studies, and part of citizenship in America is, um, standing up for what you believe in, um, standing up against unjust laws and joining the people in order to overthrow bad uh, policy and to elect the proper people to do the right thing, Um. That is completely left out.

If they left out Science it would have sent a different message, but they leave out Social Studies, because THAT’S where you’re going to learn. That’s where you’re going to be able to teach children to disobey appropriately, and so the – I find that the most EGREGIOUS omission, uh, that they could have come up with, and of course they came up with it, so – under this administration – but it’s not a coincidence that Social Studies is left out. So - um, Social Studies is where Mexican immigrant kids are going to learn about their own culture, even on this side of the border – left out, you know, so – (pp. 32-34)

Yet, he conceded the advantage of Social Studies being “under the testing radar” (p. 12) because, he said, teachers can, consequently, teach it as they wish.

Teaching of the standards results in: teaching to the test

Six teachers raised the issue of teaching to the test. Philip and Mijael were adamant in their refusal to teach to the test (TTT). Philip said, “But, honestly, I refuse to teach to the test,” (p.7). Again later, he re-stated his position: “And so, I refuse to teach to the test, because to me, those kids need a well-rounded education,” (p. 75). Mijael offered his viewpoint:

Uh, unfortunately, [NCLB] kinda dictates. It dictates to some extent what we have to teach, because we know that it’s tied to the standards-based assessment test. I guess – you know I try to work with that, but I’m not going to compromise myself, and I say if I ever start teaching to a test, then it’s time for me to change careers, ‘cause I’m not about that. (pp. 51-52)

Ashley and Mark acknowledged the existence of teaching to the test: Mark admitted: “Um, it [NCLB] severely restricts, severely narrows the curriculum, because you’re only going to teach to what’s on the assessment,” (p. 86). Ashley divulged:

One month is spent. Every minute of every day, with the exception of lunch and recess, is devoted to preparation of or administration of the state standards-based assessment. One month of curriculum. That’s astounding! (pp. 13-14)

And she anticipated even more time to be allocated toward assessment preparation the upcoming year: “we want our program to look successful. So we are kind of going to give the kids more English time than they’ve had in the past so that they will be more prepared for that test,” (p. 112). However, elsewhere, she denied that “preparing” students for the test constitutes teaching to the test: “It’s not that we’re teaching to that test, but we want to just give them more experience so they have more confidence, and at third grade is when they have to take the test,” (p. 111).

Lorna and Jocelyn both work at schools where reportedly teaching or preparing for the test is a school-wide proposition. Lorna disclosed: “Our school’s set up in the trimester system,

and we did that purposefully to aide us in assessment. It, um, helps us to have a longer period of time to work with students – 12 weeks instead of nine,” (p. 65).

At Jocelyn’s school, reportedly, preparation for assessment includes providing students with various tools, such as a blank one hundred grid “showing them how to visualize – how to use it if they needed it as they’re taking their standardized assessments,” (p. 5) and a “four block” where students enter their answer, write a number sentence, provide a non-linguistic representation and a textual explanation (pp. 7-8). Test preparation, reportedly, begins in kindergarten: “they’re [the students] very aware of how important it is to explain their answer. And that just comes from the whole school environment of really focusing on that in the last three years since kindergarten,” (p. 34). Like Ashley, Jocelyn both admitted and rejected teaching to the test.

Of course, we have to use the standardized just to teach the kids how to take the test for the standardized test, but it’s also...It’s also important to them [school administration] that we be allowed to teach and not just teach to the test and teach to taking the test. (p. 16)

And elsewhere, she said, “we try very, very hard to not let it be teaching to the test, but a lot of times ...not that you’re told to do that but that’s the best way to get them to score well,” (p. 88).

And:

And it [half-days on Wednesdays] is essentially test-taking skills, teaching the students how to be better test takers....But this last week,...we just started with the basics. Looking at a test and, you know, highlight some of the questions. We didn’t answer any questions, we didn’t – it was just like five questions, looked like a standardized test. ‘What would you look for in a question, you know? Underline what it’s asking you really.’ Um, those types of things, test-taking skills. (pp. 4-5)

Teaching of the standards results in: effects on one’s own classroom practices

Five of the teachers indicated that emphasis on standards and assessments has affected their own classroom practices. Mark implied that it has a negative effect upon his instruction:

this is the first time in my long career that I have ever felt the long arm of the federal government reach into my classroom and mess around with quality instruction and make it bad, and try to make it bad. It's never been the case before, so, um. (p. 97)

And Ashley said the timing of mandatory assessments interrupts her instructional time.

we don't choose the assessments we use. We're told what assessments to use in all areas of the curriculum. And we're given deadlines in which that we are to administer – that regardless of what we're teaching at that time, thematically of where we are personally in the curriculum, we still have to assess with assessment tools that are given to us. (pp. 2-3)

Mijael said he has changed the type of classroom assessments he now gives: [NCLB has] “impacted – it's a negative thing ‘cause it kinda binds you a little bit. It kinda takes away a little bit of your creativity because you could do portfolios, you could do, you know, all the other kinds of assessment,” (p. 52).

Meanwhile, Tim conceded that he now scores his classroom assessments to favor students.

Ok, well, I'm going to take what you've got, and I'm not going to mark against you what you didn't even touch, but let's look at what you're able to do. See what I'm saying. So, I mean, that's one of my approaches....I guess that's ... just being sensitive to, you know, the conditions of a nine year old in May after having gone, you know what I'm saying? (p. 22)

And, Cecilia found herself personally affected by the perceived volume of assessments. “It's, um, towards the end of the school year, I just needed – it was just so overwhelming. It was a lot. Assessment in itself I mean is a lot,” (p. 82). It is an affect that she said she shares with her students:

I think that if you make it a – if you connect with the kids that way and then, um, during the assessment time try to – and I've told them. I was like, ‘I know it's stressful too. I'm tired too. I know you're tired of this last one, I know. I'm tired of it also and – and you know, I remember when I was young’, this and that, you know. Then they understand you a little bit more, a little more. (p. 64)

Summary of effects on the curriculum.

Ten teachers said that standardized assessments affect the curriculum in three different ways. Five teachers, Marissa, Cecilia, Lorna, Ashley and Tim said more instructional time was now allocated to assessment. Three teachers, Tim, Ashley and Mark were concerned that standardized assessments are administered prior to instruction. And eight teachers discussed teaching the standards; they are Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Ashley, Mark, Lorna, Jocelyn, Corwin and Mijael.

In their views, teaching standards, itself, has consequences: it restricts the curriculum, compels teaching to the test and affects one's classroom practices. Four teachers, Philip, Jocelyn, Corwin and Mark perceived a curriculum narrowed to favor academic subjects tested on state and district standards-based assessments.

Of the six teachers who addressed teaching to the test as a result of standards, two, Philip and Mijael, said they refuse to do so. The other four acknowledged its existence. Two teachers who first said they taught to the test later said they did not.

Five teachers admitted that teaching standards has caused them to alter their own classroom practices. Mark suggested it affected his instruction in a nonproductive way. Mijael said he had less choice in the type of classroom assessments he administers. Tim said he now scores his assessments to give students a benefit. Ashley asserted that assessments interfere with instructional time. And in an effort to "connect" with her students, Cecilia said that she discusses with students her own personal sense of assessment "overwhelm."

Effect on dual language students.

Effects of district and state standardized assessments on dual language students were vocalized by seven different teachers. Generally, teachers perceived students to be affected by:

1) the vocabulary on standardized assessments, 2) the language used on standardized assessments, 3) cultural knowledge, and, ultimately, 4) the consequences of standardized assessments. I distinguish vocabulary from language on the basis that I regard vocabulary to pertain to words while language encompasses an entire communications system that includes words, as well as grammar, syntax, symbols and pronunciation.

Vocabulary.

Tim, Ashley, Philip and Mijael identified particular vocabulary words on the state standards-based assessment. Ashley and Mijael focused on the word *matric*. Mijael said, “For example, array in Spanish is *un matric*, but to us, *matric* is something else, the womb, or something, you know,” (p. 12). Meanwhile, Tim addressed the word *resma* requiring extrapolation on the district assessment:

I mean, for example, on that [district] test – I could pull it down and show it to you – there’s a word problem. And it’s a really difficult word problem, but in the end they’re talking about, um, I think it’s called a ream. It’s a package of printer paper. Is that called a ream?they’re having to extrapolate, right? And they’re estimating. So, they’re - in Spanish, they’re calling this package of paper, a ream - they’re calling it a *resma* – *R-E-S-M-A*. And the kids are like, ‘What the hell – what’s a *resma*? You know, and so from that, I mean like this is the first sentence. They’re like, this is a – bloom! And so, I mean I think if you can lose kids at that point, I mean the rest of it kind of goes out of the window(pp. 28-29)

Tim said the math problem is "so deeply embedded in language that.... it becomes a reading test. And it's a bad reading test because it's vocabulary that's absolutely foreign to them, and yeah," (p. 29)

Also, on the district standards-based assessment, both Philip and Tim referenced the word *awning*. Philip stated “Um – so, when we have a test that says, ‘And the *awning* on the house, you know, was ripped during the tornado,’ like- what’s an awning? not something that the kids are very familiar with,” (pp. 36-37). Tim declared:

It's just like – I don't see how in God's earth – I would never look at a kid and say, 'I'm sorry, I can't tell you what *awning* is or isn't because you're supposed to know that. Because that's a ridiculous thing, you know! And so, if someone wants to come and like give me grief about it, I mean that's fine. (p. 52)

Language.

Four teachers questioned the language, Spanish, or English, used on standardized assessments. Tim said students are tested in both languages: "But, you know, kids are doing this two to three times a year, um, and they're doing it, you know, and if – well all of our kids are in bilingual programs, so they're doing this in English and in Spanish," (p. 4). And Cecilia, Ashley and Mark expressed reservations at certain tests being available only in English. For example, Mark stated: "Um, the [district test] does not include a Spanish component, and I've fought that battle many times, um, with TD [the District's Testing Department]. And they have, uh, a wagon-load of excuses for why that's not the case," (p. 31). Meanwhile, Ashley expressed concern at dual language students being taught in one language, but assessed in another.

So, the MAPS test, for example, the computerized test that's nationally normed and standards-based that's given in all areas of the curriculum, it's **ONLY** available in English. Even though the kids are in a 90-10 dual-language program and they're taught in third grade, 70 percent of their day is in Spanish, but they're assessed in English. (p. 10)

And again:

They - you know they struggle with English spelling because they haven't gotten to that point yet in the curriculum. They are still primarily in Spanish. (p. 39)

Tim contended that students who tested proficient in English in kindergarten have been taught in Spanish for the majority of the school day since then. Nevertheless, he claimed, the state continues to qualify those same students in English and, therefore, assesses them in English rather than Spanish. Expressing still another perspective is Ashley, who recommended to her students that they take their tests in English despite being taught in Spanish because she believes that the English versions are easier than the Spanish translations.

And so I have the majority of my students taking the test in English, and year after year I score better than everyone else in my grade level. We made AYP and the rest of the school did not....

....the test in Spanish is much longer. It takes more pages to read, and it's a lot harder to get through, and children's attention span kinda gets lost faster because there's more words to read and longer syllables. I went through the test and I counted the number of five – and six- syllable words in the Spanish test as compared to the English test, and it was 80 percent higher in Spanish.The level of the test is much, much higher in Spanish than it is in English. It's at least two grade levels. So, consistently, my kids in Spanish do poorly on the Spanish test. They just get tired! And may have to sound out 80 percent more five- and six- syllable words than the kids in English.So, they're different languages. So, really technically speaking, if you're going to have a fair test, they would need to be totally different tests. (pp. 42-43)

Cultural knowledge.

In the course of their conversations, four teachers observed that items, typically related to culture, appeared on standards-based assessments in different ways. Tim cited the state's standards-based assessment in March, which he perceived as calling for knowledge of “the tooth fairy.”

Well, there's a test on the standards-based test back in March. They were asking kids about – they gave them their own culturally sort of relevant, uh, myth. I don't know if this would be a myth or a legend. Anyways, they're talking about in Mexico, there's a *raton*, a little mouse who comes and takes teeth when kids lose their teeth, right?

So that was – The whole story was based on this, and then in the end one of the questions was like, ‘What other stories might you know that might explain what happens to kids' teeth when they fall out?’ So, my kids were looking at me like – you know what I mean? Like if you – I don't know, uh, like when I grew up and my tooth fell out, I knew the tooth fairy. I didn't know anything about what happened anywhere else around the world because it wasn't – you know what I mean? It wasn't – not to say it wasn't important, but it wasn't my context.

And so, when they were – yeah, they were asking kids after they gave them what was their own background, which I thought was great. But, then they were likeThey wanted kids to talk about the tooth fairy. I was like, ‘Well, no! These kids don't know the tooth fairy because that's not their experience.’ I don't tell them about the tooth fairy. I don't deal with their lost teeth. So that was another issue where it was just kind of like doesn't make any sense. Doesn't relate. (pp. 30-31)

Cecilia and Mijael questioned the geographical appropriateness of some questions. For example, Cecilia objected to students being asked on a district test about whales and to, consequently, select proper similes when whales are not geographically available in the region.

Well, they'll have like a reading passage about some poem about whales. I'm sorry, but my kids here in [name of state] half of them have never - I would say 90 percent have never seen a whale, have never been to the ocean, um. Especially poetry, we do do a unit in poetry, but it's real basic. They don't know metaphors. I mean they're fourth graders learning a second language, they're in a dual language school. You know [TD] right? Um, this is kind of their - I wouldn't want to say like their doing, but I guess it is. (pp. 32-33)

Still, Mark alleged that NCLB particularly impacts low income students. "And No Child Left Behind comes out of... that world view, that you can actually pour information into kids - and it is particularly bad for kids who are in schools that are in low income neighborhoods," (p. 89).

It [NCLB] just ignores them [children's individual circumstances]. No, it's irrelevant. It's irrelevant to No Child Left Behind! So, no, it doesn't matter, it's - from the right-wing propaganda. Any of those considerations are simply excuses for failure, so Bush says that. What's his little line? He has this little line he says, 'more excuse for failing, are we going to....' He has - he has this little mantra that he says, you know, and it sounds good. The slogans are great, and at first everyone agrees, wow, it's a great slogan, but when you see what's behind it, um, it's pretty nasty. Um, but not, it's just irrelevant. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter that you don't speak - that you've been here three months and you, you know, don't speak English yet. It doesn't matter that your parents didn't graduate from high school and that - and you don't have all these material resources that the rich white kids have - DOESN'T MATTER.

YOU ARE expected to do exactly as, you know, and never mind the - and we're not going to give you ANY resources or ANY help. We're not going to make - we're not going to help your parents in the job market. We're not going to offer, you know, ESL classes for anybody, for your parents. We're going to DO NOTHING to help you. However, we do expect you to PERFORM EXACTLY LIKE THE RICH KIDS up at [name of high school], so there's nothing, there's zero, so no, it's just - It's completely ignoring the fact that there are factors that affect education, and thereby assessment, and, um, it just ignores that.I mean, there's a reason why most low SES kids score low on tests. (pp. 94-95)

Yet, he asserted that immigrant students are less affected. “The immigrant children from Mexico actually are less affected by this new structure, because it more closely resembles more a top-down, um, informational memorization, yeah” (p. 91). He continued:

So, let’s say you live in a low-income Mexican immigrant barrio in [names of certain towns] and you have extremely low test scores, probably a lot to do with the language factors. And that you don’t have, you know, solid dual- language programs where these kids can continue academically while acquiring English and all that, all the factors we know are true. Parents, you know, may or may not have graduated from high school, and so, you’re not kind of getting the academic support at home that say, middle-class families are getting. Um, that, I don’t know if - I mean you’re just punished as a group, so the neighborhood is punished and the school’s punished because of their bad test scores. And yeah, I mean from No Child Left Behind there’s no appreciation of the rich culture that these kids have and can bring and other life experiences they have. (p. 92)

Consequences.

This section reports six teachers’ views of student performance on standards-based assessments. Most, but not all teachers expressed concern about student placement and scores.

Mark and Ashley contended that district or school assessments result in inappropriate student placement. Mark declared,

The other thing is that to make any moves on a test like [the district test] um, you have to believe that it’s a valid test....the out of the box instructional kits.... give us far more information on what the kids know, don’t know and what we need to do about it, um, than anything you would- ever get on [the district test], they’re worthless! A lot of people would claim that they’re invalid, um, they’re a waste of time, they’re a waste of your computer time, they’re redundant, um.

And uh, it’s only a compliance measure and there’s – and they give no information, no valuable information to, um, uh, teachers. But we’ve been led to believe that they do. And so, that’s why, um, kids go on AIPs, um, Academic Improvement Plans, because of their performance on [the district test]. (pp. 30-31)

Ashley suggested a similar view of the value of the assessment data and its application.

So much valuable, valuable instructional learning time is taken away and put into this data that’s supposed to be very important that especially for the dual-language teachers and the dual-language classes and students, uh, is useless. It doesn’t mean anything.

[the scores are used] ...for example, for referral to Special Ed. And even more disturbing to me about the assessment with dual language, in particular, is that students are – if we see a student that is – we don't have a choice. If we see a student that is not doing well on all these assessment data, not showing growth, it may just be anxiety to do with the language difference, or just anxiety about so many tests and fatigue. (pp. 12-13)

However, Magdalena seemed to have a different perspective based on her students' performance. "And what is very amazing is they are doing well in the state test, you know, both the English speakers and the Spanish speakers, and half of my class take the test in English," (p. 4).

Meanwhile, three teachers expressed the view that dual language students are over-assessed. Ashley related how her students react to news of an assessment.

Any time the children hear that we're going to do an assessment today, no matter how creatively we present that, the kids will say, 'Oh gosh, not another test teacher. Can't we just do some work, please? Can we just – can we do a project? Can we do a Science experiment? Can we read a story? Would you just - ? We don't want to do another test.' And so, I don't think that they really try anyway. (p. 13)

And Tim noted the length of his district's assessment.

So, I guess part of my issue with it is, you know, at what point – you know what I mean – do kids just kind of become turned off to the idea of working through nine pages of problems when, you know what? Here's five problems. If you can show me that you can do these five problems at 80 percent consistency, then I can leave you alone (p. 20)

Cecilia and Ashley asserted that over-assessment results in fatigue, and, consequently, lower scores. Cecilia said, "Uh-hmm, by the time spring comes around, a lot of their scores go down because the kids are just really burnt out," (p. 33). Similarly, Ashley said, "even if there weren't the language barrier or the cultural barrier, or you know, whatever you want to say it is – I don't think that we're getting accurate data regardless, because they're so fatigued," (p. 13).

They both believe that as a result of assessment burnout, or fatigue, students resort to guessing for answers. For example, Cecilia alleged: "Towards the end of the year, they're tired

of testing. They're just guessing," (p. 32). Ashley emphasized that students try to outpace a test to finish quicker.

Primarily these students who don't show growth are those ones who figured out that 'If I just do it fast, the test is actually easier.' Because the computer screen – it's a test that changes based on how they do.So my really intelligent kids have figured out this. So they purposefully answer them wrong so that the answers will be – so that their questions will be easy and they can finish faster and go to PE or go to Recess. And....they do this all the time and there's nothing I can do. I didn't tell them this. They figured that out.... and they REALLY DON'T CARE how well they do, regardless....They get very little feedback. (pp. 18-19)

But, she continued, finishing faster does not equate to reading comprehension.

And they read as fast as they can, but they have absolutely no idea what they've read....the ones who get the most, uh, recognition for reading faster are the ones who least know what they're reading about....So, the data is completely – doesn't tell us anything in Spanish or English, and so what happens to children is they'll feel unsuccessful if they don't read really fast. (p. 20)

She asserted that the emphasis on speed built into the weekly DIBELS reading scores contributes to some students equating slower with "stupid."

[a student will say] 'I'm so stupid'. And I'll say, 'Why?' 'Well, because, you know, Jorge read 110 and I only read 108. I'm a terrible reader and I'm stupid'..... And even though I constantly tell the children it has absolutely nothing to do with how fast you read. 'Well, why then do we assess them every week on how fast they read?' (p. 19)

Similarly, Philip recounted a story of a student who called himself "stupid" because of his score on the district standards-based assessment:

[he] was really anxious to do this...reading test because he thought he really improved. And, um, he didn't do well. It was one of those districts tests, computerized, multiple choice, [under his breath] don't like them – but...[he whispers] he didn't do very well. And he got up and he took his chair, andwas ready to throw it. And I just put my hand on his shoulder and I took the chair, and I said, 'You know, let's not throw it.' He said, 'I'm stupid! I don't know anything!' ...And you know, it turns out, you know, that he's really frustrated that his, uh, mother and his, uh, her boyfriend had a fight the night before.I said, '...there's a lot of stuff, and, you know, taking tests when you're stressed out – and that slipped by me – is often difficult, and do you really think that you're stupid?' 'Yeah, I'm stupid mother' (pp. 35-36)

Summary of the effect on dual language students.

Of the eleven teachers, seven noted students' performance on standards-based assessments. Four teachers, Tim, Ashley, Philip and Mijael, objected to particular words appearing on the assessments: *matric*, *resma* and awning. Four teachers, Cecilia, Ashley and Mark, found the language of assessment to be an issue and Tim noted that dual language students are assessed in both languages. Three teachers, Tim, Cecilia and Ashley, contended that students are "over-assessed" and, as a result, scores are lower and inaccurate. Scores can impact a student's self-perception, according to Ashley and Philip. Magdalena, alone, reported strong achievement scores on the state standards-based assessment for both her English and Spanish speakers.

And four teachers found factors often associated with culture - fairy tales, geographically related phenomena, income levels, and language – to be present on state and district standards-based assessments.

Modifications.

An assessment modification is an alteration teachers make to assessment practices that "changes the construct being assessed," (Tindal, Hollenbeck, Health and Almond, 1977, p. 2, as cited in Hollenbeck, 2002). Hollenbeck (2002) says some modifications on large-scale assessments for some students are necessary. However, doing so requires a different interpretation of the score. As such, modifications impact validity. Both Linn (2002) and Hollenbeck (2002) agreed that extending time to respond to an assessment would constitute a modification and, therefore, affect the meaning and interpretation of a score.

In contrast, accommodations are designed to remove construct-irrelevant variance in scores by providing differential access to the test so that "confounding influences of test format,

administration or responding," (Tindal et. al, 1977, p. 1, as cited in Hollenbeck, 2002) are removed for some students. By removing factors that would obstruct some students equitably completing an assessment, accommodations provide students "with better access" (Hollenbeck, 2002, p. 397) than they would otherwise. They are justified, he said, when students score at least one standard deviation higher because of the alteration. According to Linn, fairness requires that students with disabilities be offered the opportunity to succeed on an assessment despite their disabilities and language. Therefore, tests may involve changes in order to assess knowledge or skill rather than disability. "The purpose of accommodations is to remove disadvantages due to disabilities that are irrelevant to the construct the test is intended to measure without giving unfair advantage to those being accommodated," (Linn, 2002, p. 36). Because of the difference between a modification and an accommodation and their importance, it is important, Hollenbeck (2002) said, for school districts and schools to understand the difference. Examples of accommodations would be changes in test format or types of test responses allowed (Linn, 2002).

The state in which this research was conducted permits particular accommodations on its standards-based assessment for certain situations and adaptations, but modifications are prohibited (2009-2010 Accommodations Guidance Manual of the state, hereafter referred to as State manual). Accommodations and modifications are defined in alignment with the definitions used by Hollenbeck (2002) and Linn (2002). However, the state also permits adaptations defined as "changes in assessment procedures, such as setting/environment or scheduling/timing," (State manual, p. 2) and do not require documentation as do accommodations. According to the manual, the "educational team, including the teacher primarily responsible for delivering instruction in the content area being assessed, determines which accommodations a student may

require," (State manual, p. 2); accommodations are on a student-by-student and not-class basis; and the documentation for all accommodations must be written. Among the accommodations that the manual specifically allows are translations (oral and scribed) for ELLs who are not proficient in English or who do not have a test available in their native language. Plus, "The main accommodations for Spanish speaking ELL students is the Spanish Standards Based Assessment (allowable for the first 3 years in US public schools)," (State manual, p. 2).

Among the modifications that the state manual prohibits are paraphrasing stimulus materials, test items and responses; restating the question and defining unknown vocabulary; clarifying English words for students; and spelling words for students. However, the state manual is explicit as to which types of assessments, the reading of assessment directions may be accommodated. Therefore, close attention to the manual is necessary for any teacher who wants to lawfully accommodate students on state standards-based assessments.

The reason I asked teachers whether they made accommodations on their standardized assessments was because I thought those who did might be likely to similarly make accommodations for students on their classroom assessments. However, because of teachers' time constraints, I was not able to ask all teachers this supplemental question in the interviews. Therefore, their responses while of interest, amount to few and their responses are relatively useful. Nevertheless, the responses of those who provided content relevant information are presented.

Tim indicated that his school sought to determine which state accommodations were available to students.

Because of our population, like for example, when we did the [state] Standards Based Assessment, we – we - we were very, uh, proactive about, you know, investigating which possibilities were open to us for helping our kids with this test. (p. 25)

Ashley noted that students are allowed to take the state standards-based assessment in Spanish for three years after entering the United States. Plus, she acknowledged, it was, also, possible to request a waiver to extend that time period. And Lorna said students were able to take the district standards-based assessment in their dominant language.

But if you're doing a baseline type of, um, assessment, like math, it doesn't matter. They should be taking it in their language of strength....and so that's I think a really big modification for children who come from diverse language backgrounds. It's what should be appropriately done for any student. Of course, it gets difficult. In [this state] it's a little bit easier to find that option for Spanish-speaking children. (p. 75)

Among the available state-accepted accommodations that students at Tim's school were actually able to use on the state assessment, he said, were the following: bilingual dictionaries, scribes, having portions of the test read to them, as well as taking the test in Spanish if Spanish were considered to be their dominant language. However, Ashley disagreed on the benefit of bilingual dictionaries:

....they're allowed to use the dictionary, but they don't EVER touch the dictionary.... because it's daunting! It takes too much time. It's not a tool that helps them at all, because you know, for a third grader to look up a word in a dictionary that's this tall It takes longer to do that than to even read the sentence, and by the time they looked up the word they forgot why they were even looking it up. (p. 45)

Meanwhile, Cecilia appeared to be unaware of the possibility of accommodations to the state standards-based assessment: "That's different. That one can't be changed," (p. 59). She denied making changes to the district test.

Honestly, when it comes with [district test]. I don't really know everything that's being asked there. Um, that's [whales] kind of an example, but I can't help them during [district test]. I don't – I can't. There's certain things, um, maybe in Math that if they need me to read something, because it's not a reading test, I will read it, but when it asks for an actual vocabulary, um, you know, kid – [comment breaks off]. (p. 34)

Summary of modifications.

Four teachers referenced accommodations on the state and/or district standards-based standardized assessments. Two teachers considered them helpful, one did not, and one denied that she made any changes to either the state or district standards-based assessment.

Results Summary

As indicated in the following table, the three primary themes that arose in this domain were the effects of standardized assessments on the curriculum and on students and related modifications. Within the theme of effects on the curriculum, five teachers indicated that they spend more instructional time administering assessments; three teachers objected to administering assessments before teaching students the assessment content; and eight teachers discussed teaching standards.

Four of these teachers contend that more instructional time is spent on subjects assessed, and, therefore, students have a curtailed education. Six teachers spoke to the existence of teaching to the test; two said they refused to do so, and two admitted and then denied that they teach to the test. And five teachers indicated that they have altered their own classroom strategies as a result of standardized district and state standards-based assessments.

Seven teachers expressed viewpoints indicating that dual language students were affected by the standardized assessments in the following ways: vocabulary words appearing on the assessments as well as the language in which the assessment was administered. Four teachers perceived the standards-based assessments to include cultural elements, which, they viewed as unfavorably impacting dual language students. And five of six teachers expressed concern about the scores and placements of dual language students. Five thought students were either over-assessed or mis-assessed. As a result, they contend, students are either fatigued and not scoring

well, or incorrectly placed. However, one teacher reported that her English and Spanish speaking students were “doing well in the state test,” (p. 4).

Of the four teachers who discussed modifications to standardized assessments, two considered them to be beneficial for students; one disagreed with the use of bilingual dictionaries as an assessment aid, and one teacher denied and then admitted modifying a district standardized assessment.

Table 6: Role of Standardized Assessment: themes and responding teachers

Theme	Number of Responding Teachers	Names of Teachers
Effects on the Curriculum		
Amount of time allocated to assessment	5	Marissa, Lorna, Ashley, Cecilia and Tim
Timing of Standardized Assessments	3	Tim, Ashley and Mark
Teaching of the Standards -a curtailed curriculum	4	Mark, Philip, Jocelyn and Corwin
-teaching to the test	6	Philip, Mijael, Ashley, Mark, Lorna, and Jocelyn
-effects one's own classroom practices	5	Tim, Cecilia, Ashley, Mark and Mijael,
Effect on Dual Language Students		
Vocabulary	4	Tim, Ashley, Philip and Mijael
Language	4	Tim, Cecilia, Ashley and Mark
Cultural knowledge	4	Tim, Cecilia, Mijael and Mark
Consequences	6	Tim, Cecilia, Ashley Mark, Magdalena and Philip
Modifications		
Knowledge of Modifications	3	Tim, Ashley and Lorna
Use	3	Tim, Ashley and Lorna
Dislike bilingual dictionaries	1	Ashley
Deny knowledge of modifications	1	Cecilia

Analysis

Introduction

This domain developed as a result of teachers' expressed interest and emotions surrounding standardized assessments. Unsolicited statements on "worthless" district assessments, "useless" data and a vocabulary word characterized as "ridiculous ... to know" accompanied by a stated willingness to take "grief" for translating it were simply too emotionally-laden for me to ignore.

However, because not all teachers spoke on this domain, the results represent the views of a smaller cadre of teachers than the entire sample. The number of teachers whose statements are reflected here is between three and seven of 10 teachers (the art teacher said he does not deal with standardized assessments). Thus, their comments cannot be considered to represent all the teachers and, therefore, I must point out my analysis cannot either. I also acknowledge being personally and professionally engaged by their descriptions of events and experiences and can find their fewer-in-number statements no less substantive.

Analysis

In short, I interpret teachers' narratives to say that standardized assessments and standards-based teaching disadvantage the dual language student and curriculum. Teachers' descriptions of standardized assessments reflect both effects of assessment-related practices and their own feelings, or affect, about these effects. I find affect and effect intertwined in their narratives and difficult to separate. I have not attempted to do so.

To summarize, their statements reflect the following assertions. They perceive the standards-based assessment-oriented curriculum to hamper dual language students and program by: one, having less instructional time available due to increased time administering mandated

standards-based assessments. Two, administrative mandates requiring more instructional time on assessment-related subjects narrow the content of the curriculum and, thereby, diminish the education of dual language students. It may diminish the education of other students as well. Three, as a result of administrative pressure, or directive, teachers feel compelled to teach to the test. Therefore, even less time is available for instruction because teachers spend part of that time teaching test-taking skills; and test results would also demonstrate learning to take tests, rather than subject knowledge alone. Consequently, test scores may not mean what they are purported to mean and, in turn, their interpretation, or validity, may be suspect.

A definition of validity is appropriate. According to the most recent edition of the Test Standards (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999, p. 9), validity "refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores entailed by proposed uses of tests. Validity is, therefore, the most fundamental consideration in developing and evaluating tests." The importance of validity is echoed in the words of Thorndike (2005, p. 145), "the foremost question to be asked with respect to any measurement procedure is 'How valid is it?' When we ask this question, we are inquiring whether the test measures what we want to measure, all of what we want to measure, and nothing but what we want to measure."

And four, as a result of these various effects, teachers said they modify their own class related practices. However, these practices may not always be in the students' best interests: for example, Cecilia sympathizing with students who did not want to take another test, confessed that she, too, felt overwhelmed by the testing. Students hearing and taking in her comment could have become test anxious, precipitating even lower assessment scores (Haladyna & Downing, 2004). Conceivably scores could measure not only content knowledge, but test anxiety as well.

Her comment could result in construct-irrelevant variance, or error variance that arises from systematic error. That anxiety could be reflected in the score, affecting both its meaning and interpretation, or validity.

In addition to some teachers expressing the sentiment that students are over-assessed and under-instructed due to a test-focused curriculum, they also appeared fixated on standardized assessment practices that they contend adversely affect students. Specifically, teachers maintained that dual language students are required, at times, to take assessments: 1) on uninstructed content and 2) in a language in which they have not been instructed, reportedly on district, state and national tests. The question arises how students could be expected to test on uninstructed content. One of the principles of sound assessment is that students be given the opportunity to learn the content prior to testing (Linn, 2002). Opportunity to learn arises out of a decision by the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in the *Debra P. v Turlington* (1981) case that students should be tested fairly, or based upon what has been taught in the classroom, before having to take a high-stakes test, such as for graduation (Linn, 2002). But, that ruling dealt with high-stakes tests and not routine ones. Moreover, a few teachers and Mark, particularly, appear to believe that districts and/or schools obtain some type of compensating benefit by assessing early in the semester- as in pre-testing - and then assessing later - as in post-testing - presumably demonstrating the benefit of teacher instruction. Ashley contended the practice of testing prior to instruction was based on pressure to meet deadlines. But, unless the majority of teachers would teach supremely well and students perform equally well and not become tired of testing, as alleged, then testing before instructing could not have a very positive outcome. In which case, then, administrators logically may choose to postpone testing as long as possible rather than hasten it. Plus, if scripted curricula which teachers said they use are reasonably aligned with state

standards, then, it would seem that students ought to be exposed to, at least, some of the content tested on the instruments. Why would administrators, at least in the initial test administration, act contrary to what would appear at face value to be in their best interests unless they would gain substantially by a demonstrated preponderance of later improved performance scores. A study examining timing of externally imposed tests relative to correlated classroom instruction could generate some answers in this area.

Similarly, teachers objected to assessing students in English rather than Spanish based upon more of their teaching being in Spanish rather than English at this point in students' educational programs. And research supports their sentiment. According to (Abedi, Hofstetter & Lord, 2004, p. 17), "The language of assessment should match students' primary language of instruction." Although students are enrolled in dual language programs and expected to learn in both English and Spanish, one would reason that knowledge of which language to test in would be available and inform decision-making at the school or district level. Both Mark and Ashley implicated school and/or local administrators for their role in testing early, but not for choosing the language of testing. However, through it all, they impugn NCLB for causing what they seem to regard as improper testing practices, which they similarly perceive as having inconsequential outcomes. Mark described the test scores as "WORTHLESS!" (p. 31) and Ashley as "useless" (pp. 12-13).

And what of the teachers' own testing practices? One defining feature of a standardized assessment is that it be uniformly administered. When one teacher, such as Tim, granted students additional test time on the state standards-based assessment, resulting scores became neither uniform nor comparable. According to both Hollenbeck (2002) and Linn (2002), additional testing time constitutes a modification, which, they claim, alters the construct, and, hence, the

score and its interpretation, or validity. The very first sentence in the state's accommodation manual, p. 2, states, "The [name of department] distinguishes between adaptations of a standardized test administration, accommodations, and modifications." Although the state manual is silent on the topic of additional time, it, clearly and specifically, prohibits modifications. And granting additional assessment time is considered a modification.

Plus, among those modifications that the state manual specifically prohibits are 1) restating a question with more appropriate vocabulary, 2) clarifying English words, and 3) reading test choices, items and materials aloud in any language. So, when a teacher, namely Cecilia, "reads something" (p. 34) for students on a district reading standards-based assessment, she, too, removes the assessment from the realm of standardized by introducing personalized treatment on an instrument designed strictly for unvarying group administration. However, the manual addresses state standards-based standardized tests and not district tests. But, according to the manager of testing in the TD of the district in which Cecilia works, the district cannot deviate from state assessment procedures. Asked whether the district had its own assessment administration protocols, he referred to the state's procedures and accommodations manuals. "These are the state's requirements, which they (teachers) absolutely must follow. No question. There was some leeway in when to give the assessments, but under the new administration even that is changing." As such, then Cecilia appears, like Tim, to be in violation of observing proper testing procedure.

However, teachers' outlook in regard to questionable standardized assessment practices appears directed outward rather than inward and self-reflective. Teachers readily stressed problems they said they had with testing instruments. I selected a few for discussion here. Among them is vocabulary. For example, Mijael described the word, '*matric*' as meaning 'womb'

in the Spanish that he and his students speak but 'array' in the Spanish that appeared on the test. There were two different forms of Spanish and, consequently, two meanings existed for the same word. It appears that students unaware of a proper Spanish meaning responded with the meaning they knew, introducing construct irrelevant variance. It was a systematic error because a group of students apparently responded similarly. And because their response reflected their background, it appears to manifest as a culturally-inspired source of error. Moreover, the type of error demonstrates the need on the part of test developers to examine whether vocabulary words carry alternate meanings due to culture or geographical locale. Similarly, some responsibility for checking into local or cultural meanings of vocabulary words lies with the relevant authority: district or state. And if states and districts are, indeed, "poor" and without adequate resources to review instruments for local meanings of words at possible variance with those of the test developers, then, this points to a shortcoming of the process of standardized assessment testing. The question is how to address it.

The issue raised by Mijael is complex. Research has demonstrated that reducing the use of low frequency words and complex language structures has improved the performance of English language learners (Abedi, Hofstetter & Lord, 2004). Fairness in testing is desired by all (Gipps & Murphy, 1994). However, who or how would instruments be reviewed to identify and decide at the state and/or local level upon what constitutes low frequency words and complex language structures, as well as identify and translate selected items into relevant dialects and/or languages? There is the question of feasibility (Abedi, Hofstetter & Lord, 2004). The matter of economic viability carries realistic and practical implications for testing and scoring academic performance. States and districts can only do as much as they can afford financially and manage logistically. The question of vocabulary, minimally, points to the need for serious initial

consideration of the instruments in question, their content and structure as well as their administration. It is an issue that bears serious examination at the level of the administering body.

Another teacher objection centered on what was perceived as culture-related content on assessments. For example, Tim protested students being asked about the tooth fairy on the state standards-based assessment test in March. The item reportedly presented a story about the students' "own culturally sort of relevant myth," (p. 31), a *raton* which took children's teeth after they fell out, after which a series of questions was posed for students to answer. The item was most likely related to Standard 2 of the [state's, p. 27] English Language Development Standards (ELDS) which uses the topics of fairy tales, fantasies, folklore and myths, among others, to inquire about students' grades 3 - 5, grasp of language arts. Tim's objection was not to the use of myths but to what he said was one of the last questions that asked students to describe other stories that they knew that could "explain what happens to kids' teeth when they fall out?," (p. 30). His complaint was that they could not know stories outside of their own background and class content, and to ask the question was unreasonable. "These kids don't know the tooth fairy because that's not their experience. I don't tell them about the tooth fairy. I don't deal with their last teeth," (p. 31). The real question is whether to ask students to tell another story that could involve the tooth fairy is unreasonable -- a different question than the one Tim is protesting. If the students were asked specifically to discuss the tooth fairy, then, maybe the question is culturally-based and culturally-biased; students cannot know what is outside their realm of knowledge, having neither personal nor classroom knowledge of it. But, if students were being asked to construct a fictional story that would demonstrate their knowledge of language arts, then the question is neither culturally biased nor unfair. Based on the state's ELDS manual, students

are expected to be able to, among other things, apply analogies of events or characters and/or make up fantasies about imaginary people, objects or situations. The issue may not be a matter of test bias, which occurs when an inference, or interpretation as the result of a test score, is "differentially valid for different groups " (Thorndike, 2005, p. 190), as Tim suggests. Rather, it may be an illustration of a predilection on the part of some teachers to too quickly point the finger at the construed assessment villain. And, if so, why? Perhaps some of their objections are well-founded, but some teachers appear to be prone, if not quite willing, to find fault elsewhere. It may be interesting to study from where this finger pointing arises and then develop possible means to address it professionally, but the main point is teachers need to move beyond it. It cannot further instruction, student learning and engagement, nor productivity and performance.

Raising yet another concern, Ashley and Cecilia argue that dual language students are over-assessed. As a consequence, they maintained, students fatigue, guess at answers, the "really intelligent" students attempt to out-pace the computer (Ashley, pp. 18-19) and, consequently, students' scores are low. Scores that measure fatigue, guessing or attempting to outsmart the computer would represent another construct beyond that intended, and, if so, construct-irrelevant variance would again be introduced (Haladyna & Downing, 2004).

While dual language teachers may hasten to object based upon what they perceive as students' best interests, what is the impact on dual language students of these reported and perceived violations of sound assessment principles? Two teachers, Ashley and Philip, located in different districts, offered observations of student reactions to low scores due to what teachers considered to be poorly administered, constructed and/or emphasized assessments. Ashley disagreed with the DIBELS emphasis on speed versus comprehension because, she said, one, students can read fast, but lack comprehension; and, two, students who read slower by two words

than another student have called themselves "stupid," contributing to false negative self-views (p. 19). Similarly, Philip recalled a boy who became angry at himself and said he was "stupid" because he scored lower than he expected on a district reading assessment. He had worked so hard, said Philip, on improving his reading. Under his breath Philip whispered, "don't like them [district assessments]," (pp. 35-36). However, neither Philip nor Ashley revealed how they counter these apparent false negative self-views. So, in addition to potentially invalid assessment interpretation, teachers suggested that some students may acquire incorrect negative self-constructs as a result of reported standardized assessment practices. An article, "Intrinsic motivations, literacy, and assessment practices: "That's my grade. That's me," by Thomas and Oldfather (1997) studied the association between students' grades and their self-view. It indicated that the level of growth a student makes in his academic progress is important, rather than the focus on an isolated or moment-in-time grade. Teachers could have sought, therefore, to counter a negative self-view by directing students' attention to their level of growth in learning instead of the score. Possibly, one method of positive intervention may be professional development to help teachers reframe students' perceptions of their scores so they are helped to recognize, as per Thomas and Oldfather (1997), their levels of improvement as well as further opportunities for learning.

In closing, I point out that this assessment-fueled milieu constitutes part of the climate and environment in which this sample of teachers teach. In addition to possible effects on the program and students, dual language teachers, themselves, appear personally impacted by practices associated with standardized assessment. Their morale appears impacted and they display a sense of distrust of the entire testing apparatus. Mark admitted that he is intimidated and pressured by the administration when he acts, he said, in the best interests of the student to

not administer an assessment prior to instruction. He maintained that he fights on from "the belly of the beast," (p. 24). Both Tim and Cecilia appear emotionally charged. And Ashley has left her teaching position to begin a magnet school in a neighboring community.

Teachers disparage standardized testing and its perceived effects on the curriculum and on students. Their discontent with the influence of testing practices may color their judgment. It certainly colors their outlook. How that outlook affects their pedagogy is unknown, but given its depth and scope, it rises to the level of concern. Consistent and periodic professional development may help retain good teachers and improve teachers' outlook, as well as help them become better informed about standardized assessment uses, benefits and practices.

Chapter 6

School Classroom Assessment Philosophy

Results

and they make me, in addition to that, which is so frightening and sad to me – they make me publish my data in my classroom for all the children to see. Yes, I have to have a data wall where ALL of these test results are published for the whole class to see. Not names, but numbers, and the kids know THEIR number, and they know how THEY compare to the other people in the class. So, that’s supposed to be motivational to the students to do better....and intrinsically motivate them. But what I see happening is it just defeats them and lets them see, ‘You know what? I’m the last and I’m good at being the last, and I think I’ll just stay the last.’Rhonda (p. 16)

Introduction

Before beginning the interviews, I assumed that school administrations would adopt a definite philosophy on classroom assessment. I arrived at this assumption because I thought that state and district policies on assessment, standardized and classroom, would influence schools to come to consider how to best assess students in the classroom. Perhaps, I was influenced by Black and Wiliam’s (1998a, 1998b, 2004) conceptualization of the “black box,” and how the classroom is the hub of learning and the place where teaching, learning and assessment apex. I thought inquiring about schools’ classroom assessment philosophies might yield information and insight on and, perhaps, a point of comparison between teachers’ classroom assessment philosophies and those of their schools. Because of this cognitive perspective, I asked teachers to describe their school’s classroom assessment philosophy.

A few definitions are helpful. I define school classroom assessment philosophy as a school’s theory-based approach to teaching and assessing. From it, policy occurs. I define policy as a school’s official stance on a particular issue, such as, classroom assessment. Practices are the particular ways that policy is put into action, typically through teacher action in the classroom. In

short, philosophy is a belief; policy is an official position; and practices are techniques used to implement schools' policies and philosophies. (Definitions are modified from those downloaded, September 30, 2010, wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn).

A school administration's official belief, or set of beliefs, about the nature and role of classroom assessments in the learning process is my definition of a school's official classroom assessment philosophy. An unofficial philosophy on classroom assessment would be the one that actually governs the classroom assessment practices within the school. It may be formulated by the teachers or it may be nonexistent, meaning teachers do as they please. (Definitions are modified slightly from those downloaded, October 7, 2010 <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=philosophy>).

I anticipated that teachers would simply restate their schools' classroom assessment philosophies; that did not necessarily occur. Teachers did, however, discuss what they conceived as relevant in relation to classroom assessment at their schools and in their classrooms.

Teachers' reported perceptions of their schools' classroom assessment philosophies were in direct response to my inquiry about their schools' philosophy and constitute the primary content for this results section. If elsewhere in the interview, they offered a comment that I considered to be highly correlated to either their initial response or to that of another teacher's at their school, I included that statement. Otherwise, only their replies comprise the content represented in this section. Themes, with the number of responding teachers noted in parentheses, include: 1) official classroom assessment philosophies (3); 2) practice-driven responses (6); and 3) non-defined or un-official classroom assessment philosophies (2).

Official classroom assessment philosophies.

Three teachers, Philip, Mark and Mijael, all males, identified their schools' classroom assessment philosophies. Philip reported that his school was a *Baldrige* School that used classroom assessment, specifically, formative assessment to further instruction. “Um, as far as, uh, you know, school-wide as far the philosophy is concerned, we’re a *Baldrige* School, which is a Strengthening Quality School – SQS, (SQS),” he said (p. 4). And, he said, the school used formative assessment to drive student learning.

Well, I think like with any school, um, your classroom assessment’s really is going to what’s, uh, is what’s going to drive our instruction. So, we really try to focus a great deal on formative assessment so that we can better gauge how students are doing at a very specific point in time. And then work to advance their skills from that – that point. (p. 2)

Elsewhere in the conversation, Philip acknowledged use of other school endorsed types of classroom assessment: “part of my assessment also and our school’s assessment is a lot of observations and anecdotal records," (p. 3).

As in Philip's first comment, Mark said the purpose of his school's classroom assessment philosophy was to further student academic success. Moreover, he said, the faculty agreed with that philosophy.

[Classroom assessments are] solely to evaluate what children, uh, know, what they don’t know and then how to use that information ... to further their academic success. So, that’s the general philosophy. We all agree on that. We may not agree on the quality of the assessments, um, the origin of the assessments and that sort of thing, but for their use, that’s universal I’d say. I haven’t heard any, um, disagreement to that. (p.16)

Meanwhile, the classroom assessment philosophy at Mijael's school, he said, was that of “authentic learning.”

Well, um, you know I’ve been – I’ve been at [name of school] for 11 years and so I’ve kinda seen a lot of changes. Currently, I think we’re moving in the right direction where our school’s philosophy is based on rubrics and authentic learning versus just, um, standard-based assessment things. (p. 2)

Asked to define authentic learning, he responded,

I would say more, uh, student-generated rubrics. Um, authentic learning to me is making whatever learning, um, culturally relevant to the student and like their background, where if we're doing anything on, you know, literature taking in account the student's background and language base. Um, in other words, things that they're interested in and applying it to, like I said, their families and, uh, um, just so that – so it's fun, it's authentic and it's not fragmented. It's not - something that they can connect with I should say. (p. 2)

The three teachers who identified their schools' classroom assessment philosophies all directly related their schools' philosophies to further student learning. Thus, these schools reportedly have adopted a school-wide approach to classroom assessment that teachers seemed to understand, find meaningful and could articulate. Consequently, teachers would purportedly know that the aim of classroom assessment is student learning.

Practice-driven responses.

Some teachers' responses reflected practice-based assessment that took two forms. One type appeared to be what teachers related because that was the practice at their school. In other words, that is the type of classroom assessment that they did because that was what their schools did. And the second type of classroom assessment that teachers discussed appeared to be directly related to students' performance on assessments, that orientation was suggested either through teachers' emphasis on the role of standards in assessments or on the data as a result of assessment. The difference is subtle because, presumably, teachers who appeared to administer assessments based upon practice at their schools did so because their schools also wanted to increase student performance on standards-based assessment. The suggested difference is one of emphasis.

Focus on their schools' practice.

In contrast to identifying the concepts and beliefs supporting their schools' classroom assessments, two teachers spoke directly to assessment-related practices at their schools when asked to describe their school's classroom assessment philosophy. For example, Tim responded.

Right, um, you know, I mean, we just adopted a new Math program and it's called Everyday Math ... ah, sort of requires us to follow, ah, ah – you know, the assessment component of it as well. So that's not – that's not – we haven't created that. That came with the – with the package. (p. 3)

Cecilia's first response was, "Well, now, classroom assessment, that recently has changed a lot," (p. 13). As to how, she replied,

Uh-hmmm, the last couple of years I would say, now it's going to affect my school in particular, but I think most [name of town] schools, from now on, most report cards won't be letter grades, so that for one affects assessment a lot. (p. 13)

But, elsewhere in discussion, she mentioned SQS:

Another thing, our school is very big on SQS. SQS is, um, I think it's systems, um, systems – something about quality and school or something like that. It's about systems, like what we were talking about, but it does – um, assessments are a part of it, and that's basically rubrics and the charting and setting goals, um, and I guess a lot of reflection. (p. 22)

Focus on assessment performance.

Four other teachers' statements revealed a school perspective on classroom assessments that may be associated with being performance-based either because of an emphasis on standards or data. For example, Lorna, asked to describe her school's classroom assessment philosophy, responded with the standards as the "method of assessing," (p. 20).

Okay, um, the school's philosophy is based on the standards. We use the district standards which are derived from the state standards. OUR report card is set up according to the standards system. And so the message that we get repeatedly, that is conveyed all the way down from the superintendent's office through the clusters and through the school administrator is to, um – be very clear with the students about what the standards are that they should meet for their grade level. And, um, as we're teaching the lessons throughout the year to refer to the

standards and to, um, share them in child-friendly language with the students, uh, to use the standards as the – as the method of assessing and also, um, to – to match that to their report card. We use the standards-based report card. We were one of the first schools to pilot that, so we've been using it for several years. We don't give, um, letter grade on our report card. (pp. 19-20)

Similarly, Jocelyn's school reportedly prepared its students for standards-based assessments on a school-wide basis. Preparing students school-wide suggests an administrative aspiration that they perform well.

Okay. Okay, um, our school and, you know, of course now with No Child Left Behind and all of those mandates, you know, that we have to have, but, um, essentially obviously, we have to have assessment just to be accountable for our teaching and our students' learning, but, um – We do have standard assessments that we take. We do practice on those quite a bit on teaching test-taking skills for when they do take assessments. We kind of do that throughout the year. ...For example, in my classroom, um, the way it's set up on – for the whole school on Wednesday morning for one hour, because Wednesdays are half a day. The students only come half a day and then the teachers have professional development in the afternoon. So, it's a mandate through the whole school that one hour of your Wednesday be spent on, um, we call it strategic intervention. (p. 4)

Meanwhile, Ashley said at her school, assessment and data were "central."

So, um, assessment is just about ALL that we talk about. We really don't talk about anything else. We talk about assessment and the data and how it's driving our instruction, and, uh, we're asked to meet once a week in uh, grade levels, to discuss our data in different areas. For example, uh, first week of the month we talk about Math data; second week, Reading data; third week, Writing data, etc. And we're supposed to discuss individual students with our team JUST strictly looking at their data. (p. 4)

She said her school relied heavily on assessment data to drive instruction.

Um, my school believes that we should use data to drive our instruction and that we should spend a great deal of our contract time and off-contract time analyzing data that we've collected from multiple assessments in all areas of the curriculum. And they really believe that that data is CENTRAL to WHAT we teach and HOW we teach it, and our style of teaching, and how we form groups of our students. (p. 2)

And reliance on data prevailed over student needs, she maintained.

So you know the whole motto, our motto is 'Let data drive instruction. Let data drive instruction;' not, 'Let children's needs drive instruction. Let children's motivational levels drive instruction' - none of that! (p.17)

Ashley perceived that her school not only held students second to performance on standards, but that its instructional interventions ran counter to students' well-being.

it's even to the point where students who don't show enough growth, who aren't meeting their target goals, it's all targeted on a computer. We have a PDA that allows us to see where they [students] SHOULD be, uh, according to where they started, etc. If they're not where they SHOULD be, then we have to take them out of their more fun classes, like Art, Music, um, PE, Recess, and give them what we call 'Intervention.' And so, they're pulled into a small group to receive yet another hour of reading instruction based on how they do on these invalid assessments. So, it really does affect their life in a great way. I mean for a child in third grade if you –

To take away their recess or take away their PE, you know, their one PE 30-minute period per week that they get, I mean it's comparable to putting them on, you know, some kind of probation or mandatory work labor thing, you know, that they do to people on the highways or something ... We might as well put them in little orange vests and make them pick weeds outside or something because they're not doing well. They might like that better (pp. 17-18)

Moreover, she reported that students' grades were posted publicly, in her opinion, to students' detriment.

and they make me, in addition to that, which is so frightening and sad to me – they make me publish my data in my classroom for all the children to see. Yes, I have to have a data wall where ALL of these test results are published for the whole class to see. Not names, but numbers, and the kids know THEIR number, and they know how THEY compare to the other people in the class. So, that's supposed to be motivational to the students to do better. So, they see that they're the lowest one in the entire class. So, that's supposed to be motivational to the students to do better and intrinsically motivate them. But what I see happening is it just defeats them and lets them see, 'You know what? I'm the last and I'm good at being the last, and I think I'll just stay the last.' So, all I see is you know – and I'm not against assessment in any way but the way that the No Child Left Behind Act and Title I people who take federal funds and state funds, bilingual funds, any funds, it's just - it's really ridiculous. (pp. 16-17)

Magdalena's emphasis on the importance of assessment data seemed similar to Ashley's.

"We need to use – I mean differentiated instruction first but the assessment is the same for

everybody, the same,” (p. 3). Magdalena added, “The director, the principal, check the data, okay? We must have that data. I can show you the data. We have like a data binder. (p. 5)...So, the director, the principal, checked the data also,” (p. 6).

Non-defined or unofficial school classroom assessment philosophies.

Marissa said before she could discuss the school's classroom assessment philosophy, she first had to give a “little bit of background,” on the school (p. 2). She referenced a series of incoming and outgoing inexperienced principals amidst a veteran faculty as the reason for the school not yet having an official classroom assessment philosophy. After four years with four principals, the school finally had a principal whom the faculty supported. Now, she said, the school was developing a classroom assessment philosophy.

There are, um, there are some things that are – that are being more – that we’re trying to focus on – more than others. We are looking at differentiating and not just you know, ‘Oh, I’m sitting them in a small group with somebody that can help them.’ We’re looking at really differentiating – like this student needs to have their assessments taken orally or just needs ah, ah, to be able to present, needs to be able to research and then, you know, do something else. Or this student needs – you need to write down his answers, or you need to let him type his answers and you spell check. And things like that rather than he sits at the front of the row. (p. 6)

Because it was not yet official, not everyone had adopted that approach, she said. In the meantime, teachers at her school enjoyed the freedom to pursue classroom assessment approaches of their choice, as did she. “I am [using differentiated and formative assessment]. Some other teachers aren’t. It’s not school-wide, and that’s what the principal and the instructional coach are working on,” (p.11).

Corwin's school classroom assessment philosophy appeared in a similar, not identical state as Marissa's. The school had, he said, an official standards-based classroom assessment philosophy; however, teachers reportedly individually interpreted and implemented it as they

chose. They did so to such an extent that he said, he could not define it. That is, although his school technically had an official philosophy, the school operated as if it did not because teachers individually decided how to assess student learning.

It's hard to say. It's hard to describe a school philosophy, because everything tends, for better or for worse, tends to be more individualized within classroomsand so to say that there's a school-wide philosophy ... I don't really think there's a strict one. There's ideas, you know. And according to standards-based learning, the idea is to look at kids and their growth; not to penalize them for what they don't know but to look at what they do know and how they've grown over time....and that's what we're SUPPOSED to be doing as a district. (pp.1-2)

Domain Summary.

Three of the 11 teachers reported their perceptions of their schools' official classroom assessment philosophies. Two teachers indicated either their school did not have one or it operated as if it did not. Plus, six teachers responded to the question on philosophy with practice-driven responses that seemed to stress student performance on standards-based assessments. Teacher identification and responses are displayed in the table below.

Table 6. School Classroom Assessment Philosophies: Themes and responding teachers

Theme	Number of Responding Teachers	Names of Teachers
Official Philosophy	3	Philip, Mark and Mijael
Practice-driven responses	2	Tim, Cecilia
Focus on their school's practice		
Focus on assessment performance	4	Lorna, Ashley, Magdalena and Jocelyn
Nondefined or unofficial	2	Marissa and Corwin

Analysis

Culture and Individuality

A few schools may include student culture and/or individuality as part of their schools' classroom assessment philosophies, based on teachers' accounts. One teacher specified authentic learning as the basis for his school's classroom assessments and two teachers indicated that they differentiated either instruction or assessment.

Mijael explained what authentic learning meant to him. "Authentic learning to me is making whatever learning, um, culturally relevant to the student and like their background ... taking into account the student's background and language base," (p. 2).

Marissa and Magdalena reportedly differentiated classroom practice. Magdalena said her school's philosophy was to differentiate instruction but not assessment. "We need to use – I mean differentiated instruction first but the assessment is the same for everybody, the same," (p. 3). Marissa 's school at the time of the interview was reportedly developing a classroom assessment philosophy but, she said, she was using both differentiated assessment and formative assessment.

We are looking at differentiating and not just you know, 'Oh, I'm sitting them in a small group with somebody that can help them.' We're looking at really differentiating – like this student needs to have their assessments taken orally or just needs ah, ah, to be able to present, needs to be able to research and then, you know, do something else. Or this student needs – you need to write down his answers, or you need to let him type his answers and you spell check. And things like that rather than he sits at the front of the row. (p. 6)

Differentiated instruction is defined as "an approach to teaching that advocates active planning for student differences in classrooms," (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 1). It intends to responsively accommodate student differences by recognizing student traits of readiness, learning profile, affect and interests, she said. Learning profile, or how a student learns most

effectively, is based, she said, on culture as well as individual style, intelligence, preference, and gender. Thus, differentiation intends to take the individual into account and may include culture. Differentiation may occur through content, process, product and environment (Tomlinson, 2003). Marissa's statement indicated she differentiated through product, or assessment, and Magdalena's suggested she did so through content, instruction, and, perhaps, process, or differentiated groups. Therefore, it would appear that Magdalena's school, including Magdalena, and Marissa, herself, intentionally incorporated student individuality through instructional content, process and/or assessment. However, how that actually unfolded in their classrooms is not known.

Also, Philip identified his school as relying on formative assessment to drive instruction. Formative assessment, as characterized by Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b) is individually oriented. If that were the case at Philip's school, then the individual, with his or her culture, may also be accommodated. As with Marissa's and Magdalena's differentiated practice, just how Philip or his school define it is not clear here.

Emotions

One teacher's, Ashley's, comments reflected some emotion in discussing her school's classroom assessment philosophy. For example, she said, "So, um, assessment is just about all that we talk about. We really don't talk about anything else," (p. 4). And, "our motto is 'Let data drive instruction. Let data drive instruction' not, 'Let children's needs drive instruction, let children's motivational levels drive instruction' - none of that!" (p.17). She expounded on her perception that students at her school are, essentially, punished for not performing at standard level. She spoke about intervention subsequent to assessment as the equivalent of putting children in "little orange vests and make them pick weeds outside or something because they're not doing well [on these invalid assessments]," (pp. 17-18) Her statements signified a current of

indignation, if not anger, at her perception of the effect of the assessment process on students at her school. Moreover, her school's reported requirement to maintain a "data wall" where scores were posted for "the whole class to see" is reminiscent of an out-dated practice that overlooked the importance of children's self-efficacy in learning and self-esteem, in general.

Practice-driven

Six teachers responded with practice-driven school classroom assessment philosophies. Based upon teachers' remarks, teachers and, possibly schools, appeared to focus more on the day-to-day practicalities of teaching and assessing than on the philosophies upon which assessments may be based. The pressure for teachers to help students perform at grade-level on assessments may be so high that teachers may confuse or not take the time to recognize the difference between philosophy and practice: for example, Lorna's comment on the standards as the "method of assessing." The difference between philosophy and practice may not even arise as a consideration to them.

Chapter 7

Classroom Assessment

Results

a scripted, you know, curriculum, which more and more, um, we have. I mean I have boxes, uh, there's a box right there - out-of-the-box reading assessment. There's a box in back of you - out-of-the-box Science curriculum and assessment, and those boxes over there - Math, out-of-the-box Math, um, curriculum and assessment. And the only one that's not out of a box - because I can't imagine how they'd do it - is Writing. But even those assessments are directly, um, dictated, uh, by the district, and so - And it went from none of that to now that's all you have...Plus, from the White House all the way down to every principal in every school - at least in [his district] - you ARE told, um, this term - program fidelity - and to do what the box says....We're just implementers of curricula that's developed, you know, elsewhere; handing teachers these boxes of, uh, learning and then we open them up and implement them, um. The idea being that, you know, maybe you could hand this someday to a chimp who could do the same thing. So, it shows, um, incredible disrespect for the teaching, uh, profession.....Mark. (pp. 17-20)

Classroom Assessment Philosophies

Although this chapter is concerned with practice, many teachers volunteered their philosophies, or beliefs, about classroom assessment. These are presented first; ideally, they serve to inform practice. At times, teachers introduced their classroom assessment philosophies as philosophies. At other times, I interpreted their stated beliefs about the purpose of classroom assessment as philosophies. Combined, these statements constitute teachers' views about the meaning and purpose of classroom assessment philosophy. Teachers' views reflect three predominant themes: 1) their individual philosophies, 2) the belief that classroom assessments should be individualized, and 3) the belief that the purpose of classroom assessment is to inform instruction. A note about how the themes are categorized is appropriate: If, for example, a

teacher expressed the idea that the main purpose of classroom assessment was to inform instruction, I grouped that statement within teachers' individual philosophies. If, however, a teacher had already identified her primary philosophy and, then, added a statement about believing that assessment served to inform instruction, that additional statement was added to the inform instruction category. In other words, individual philosophies contain those statements that I understood to reflect teachers' primary beliefs about the value of classroom assessment and the other categories represent beliefs that I considered to be additional.

Individual philosophies.

Ten individual teachers' philosophies are presented, first, by theme and, then, by teacher. One teacher did not explicate either a philosophy or statement about the purpose of classroom assessment. The themes I perceived to predominate are related to: 1) learning, 2) instruction 3) motivation, and 4) other.

Learning-related.

Mark distinguished between classroom assessment and testing. "Well there's assessment and there's testing," (p. 9). He clarified: "It's not an assessment - I wouldn't even call it an assessment if it's not used to enhance classroom learning and classroom teaching," (p. 17). Jocelyn appeared to consider the purpose of classroom assessment to be to reveal the extent of student knowledge. "If it's just a classroom – if it's just like an assessment as far as Math or Reading or whatever, um, analyze what it, you know, how the students did in certain areas," (p. 42). Philip attested to being a strong believer in collaborative learning, which he seems to follow through on in his classroom assessments.

one of my personal, um, philosophies on education, is a collaborative sharing of knowledge, um, is - it just makes it so much better, you know. If it went contradictory to what I believed in, I would have a really difficult time in that but, um, luckily for me they [the school's philosophy and his] mesh pretty well. (p. 15)

In the quote that follows, Philip described five options for responding that he gave students for a classroom assessment on a reading, entitled *Weijo and Grandfather Rock*. The story is about a boy who has a knife and who is starving, walking around looking for food, finds a rock and a buffalo cow and has choices to make. Students have to correctly identify the sequence of events in the story, apply critical thinking to the choices Weijo made and exemplify how they extend critical thinking to their own lives. They have one week in which to complete the assessment.

in this particular case, I gave the students five different options as to how they want to answer these questions. Um, one of the options is in the essay....Uh, a second option is a poster presentation or a graphic organizer, or what I call decision-tree....Um, as I said, another option that they have is a poster presentation, uh, with drawings or cut-outs from magazines. Um, they can do a decision tree, and then they would have to obviously explain what it all means to the class. So this allows them to really work at their own pace. If they're uncomfortable with writing they can, you know, use their artistic abilities. Or if they're more analytical they can use a decision tree to – to demonstrate each decision has possible outcomes. And that allows them the opportunity to really explain in a way that THEY understand themselves to the class and allows the students to see another way of thinking about the whole situation. The other one is a role playing, uh, putting on a skit that illustrates the answers to the question. So, again I – you know, if it's my assessment, if I'm the student, um, and I'm given the opportunity to do a skit, I can ask a couple of my other peers to help me, but I'm the one who's going to be assessed for it because....And if they [two peer helpers] choose to be assessed, then all three will be taken into account, and if they say, 'No, we're going to do something else, but we want to help him do this.' Then the person who initiated it is the one who's going to be assessed....Another one is, um, 'Work with a partner to share your answers and have your partner write your answers and then present them to the class.' So, it's kind of like a – kind of like a think, pair, share. Uh, one of the students will work with somebody else. I will work with Bob and I will tell Bob my answers, and Bob will write my answers down as he hears me saying them, and then we'll collaborate. Just like, 'No, that's not right.' And then Bob will present my answers to the class. I want Bob to also experience note taking. I want Bob to also be experiencing pulling more information out of me. And, um, so that way if I'm having a difficult time again presenting in front of the peers, I'm working with somebody who isn't so shy, but it is MY work....Um, and lastly, the last one I have is, uh, recording. So, record yourself reading the passage. Record yourself reading the passage to a family member and then talk about the answers with your family member and then present the audio to the class. So, maybe, you know, students don't feel comfortable, uh, standing in front of the class and doing this or writing or

anything like that so I would say, you know, ‘Bob, why don’t you go home. You don’t want to do some of these other ones. Why don’t you go home, read it to somebody that you trust at home and then have them ask you some of these questions and then answer them, and if you want to stop and start – fine, you know. (pp. 83-88)

Instruction-related.

Lorna believed that classroom assessment should drive instruction.

But the main statement about my philosophy on classroom assessment is that the only reason or purpose for classroom assessment is to drive instruction and to know how to continue to serve a student’s needs. And in my opinion that’s the only – the ONLY purpose for classroom assessment. (p. 55)

Mijael agreed, but asserted that students should know what it is that assessments indicate they need to improve upon.

Right, no, and I think, you know it makes sense to me what they say is that assessment should drive instruction. So by assessing you know what the student is doing and what he needs to do better so that – but tell *them* that. (pp. 22-23)

Cecilia maintained that classroom instruction and assessment require backward planning.

Basically, my philosophy on assessment is if the teacher doesn’t understand that assessment front and back and side to side, then how can the children achieve on that? Like – and all times during ALL instruction that assessment needs to be in the back of your head. To know that that’s what they’re going to need to - that will be used to assess them, whether it’s observations, whether it’s an actual paper and pencil um. They need to be given the opportunities to have learned whatever is given to be able to achieve in these assessments. (p. 19)

Motivation-related.

Rather than strategically prepare students for classroom assessment like Cecilia, Ashley said she wanted to see the assessments, themselves, motivate students.

The kind of assessments that I do that I really, um, value and that I find give me real information and that, um, are motivational to students. I think it’s important that MY assessments and that ALL assessment be motivational to students, be confirming for themselves and what they’ve learned to kinda give them that little boost....And also that’s really relevant to the curriculum that I’m teaching and it’s timely so, uh, I’m not assessing on something, you know, that is not what I’ve been teaching. So, the kind of assessment because of my style of teaching, which

is called GLAD – Guided Language Acquisition Design. It's very visual and it's sort of....it really appeals to ALL learning styles and personality styles, so it's, uh, it's - the whole body is involved kind of. (p. 47)

Similarly, one way Marissa chooses to help students learn is, she said, by making her assessments available to students in ways that they “enjoy.”

I have to be open to what my kids enjoy doing, what their strengths are in order to accommodate my assessments. Because, I'm not here to flunk anybody. I'm here to help them learn, and, un, not just learn academic things, but know how they learn best so that then they can take that and (pause) – and – um, I guess, um, and show people that they do know things, you know, and not in the traditional sense, maybe, but that they can present. They can use a computer – very well. (p. 36)

Other.

To identify what students know, Tim seems to prefer the use of teacher intuition to classroom assessments, especially those that are computerized and online.

Yeah, I guess just to be brief about it, you know, I think - It's, it's - I'm not a super - I'm not a real rigid assessment kind of a person. I don't enjoy - I don't see the meaning. In particular, I mean I talked about the online computer testing. Um, for one, I guess my thought is that when kids are doing an online, you know, testing of reading on a computer where they have to manipulate a screen and a mouse and log on and so, you know, and buttons and so. You know, I mean, what is it that's we're really - what is it that we're really assessing in that case? You know what I mean? Um, it's not - it's not the way in which we teach reading. Uh, it's not their - it's not their sort of un, It's not their most frequent way in which they engage with reading, right? So, for me, you know, I have a hard time getting real excited about something like that, um....So, I guess my philosophy about assessment is that, you know, I feel myself, at least as a teacher, you have a certain intuition about, you know, who's got it, who's almost got it and who's struggling and who's in the dark. (pp. 18-20)

Art teacher Corwin has not implemented structured classroom assessments into the art curriculum.

this is the big problem we have in art. And I had a long discussion with the other art teachers and the itinerant ones as well. They don't want to turn it [assessment] into a dirge. They want art to be a very light and pleasurable event. But in order to maintain it into the curriculum, you have to have some sort of assessment, and so

the requirement we have is you have to have at least three grading points [scores] per quarter. (p. 54)

Individualized.

Seven teachers indicated a belief that students' individual characteristics be considered when assessing learning. Marissa, Mark, Lorna, Corwin, Philip, Cecilia and Magdalena all emphasized individuals and their circumstances, or characteristics, in assessment. For example, Marissa said,

Well for my classroom assessment, I take in the characteristics of my students, um, to let them - let them do things that - that allow them to - to express their knowledge in different ways. Otherwise, with my population I think I'd have a lot of kids if it was just a paper/pencil test not really being able to express what they know. (p. 35)

"Informal assessments," in contrast to "out-of-the-box standardized assessments," permit individualizing assessment, maintained Mark.

But the more informal assessments that we do, um, in the classroom, um, a teacher is able to take, um, to take, uh, individual, um, circumstances into account. And what you want to look for are gains; gains from point A to subsequent points B, C, D that are in the future. (p. 51)

He also offered,

It's just part and parcel of what you do, but it's not - I wouldn't consider it new or innovative or anything else. It's what you do, just like when you spill the milk you clean it up, you know. And so when you give assessments, you make them accessible in all these different ways to the students. (p. 67)

Lorna asserted, similarly,

individual children for different reasons are on different paths with different constraints, different difficulties, different motivations. And so then assessment becomes individual because you get individual results. (p. 31)

She continued,

I know other people would want to assess program, or assess how kids are doing versus other kids, and so on and so forth, but truly and ideally, it should just— it

should be about individuals. It should be about children and about students, um, in my opinion. (p. 55)

Corwin related assessment to individual expression and perspective in art.

These are things that I look at you know. For me, it's (classroom assessment) really individualized, because like I said, that one little boy. I mean very, very different abilities, but the fact that he's created two planes is huge! Yeah, I mean, that's a whole different level of thinking and of seeing for him, uh. And then for others, it's so normal to see things that way. This is like so advanced. Yeah, I mean, so that's the other thing, is I mean when you look at these – um, this is the same table. You get really different views, um. And also it's their view of the world. It's how they see things. (pp. 14-15)

Philip and Cecilia also stressed individualizing classroom assessment, indicating that to do so, they will often use project and performance types of assessments. Cecilia noted, "For me, a lot of assessments that I do myself are more like projects, and like research, little types of things that's more like personalized," (p. 59). She also seemed to indicate that student preference played a role in the type of assessment they would have, "Well some of the assessments ... 'cause there's some times that's something that I'll make. That's totally different. That's pretty much based on them [the students]; that's totally up to them," (p. 54). Meanwhile, Magdalena, disclosed that she does consider individuals in terms of special needs groups and stipulated that she did so on her own initiative and not that of the school's. When asked if she differentiated classroom assessment, she replied,

Yes. Sometimes, yes, sometimes. But not for the school. For example, for Special Ed, spelling. If I do 15 words, the Special Ed will have five, English, the ELL will have five words in English, not all of them. (p. 12)

To inform instruction.

In addition to statements already cited in their individual statements on classroom assessment philosophy, five teachers mentioned that they, also, rely on assessment to inform instruction: Magdalena, Ashley, Jocelyn, Tim, and Philip. Magdalena said, "I put all in my data.

No. I had a data on my record book on my data and I see what they need, what they are missing,”

(p. 19). And,

When we, uh, when we do assessment, I have my agenda, my book record, and so I have that over there. If I see that many of them didn't address the skill, I re-teach again. I did it over there with a three-dimensional geometric shape. They didn't get it. Why, because the vocabulary. I review my learning [teaching] also. I review it. Review my – yeah, because they – most of them, they didn't understand the 3-D dimension geometric shape analysis, you know, compare and see which are the features, so, they, most of them, score low. So I do the *PDSA* [Plan, Do, Study, Act] with them and they told me that was hard for them, the vocabulary, so I re-teach the vocabulary. [So, you give them different words?] No, the same word but sometimes I gave to them many, many things at one time, so I need to gave to them less. (p. 21)

Ashley explained how she uses charts, or posters, in GLAD as assessment to help inform her instruction.

“We start our unit, we begin the lesson or we – it's not really a lesson; it's more the session, with ‘Let's go to our chart and see what we've learned, what we know.’ And we'll add to it, and we may change it. We might figure out well that's not really true. Heroes aren't people who are rich....But it helps me focus my teaching as well. It's an assessment of its own.... It's an ongoing, living assessment; one that helps us re-focus on a daily basis what we're learning, what we know, what we think we know....and it's very quick and it's efficient, so I can see as a teacher, ‘Did they really get the message that I was trying to get to them, or do I need to do it again? Do I need to approach it in a different way ‘cause they didn't get it.’ (pp. 102-104)

Periodic curricular program assessments appear to help Jocelyn identify the extent of student learning and, consequently, inform her teaching.

Um, it allows me to see, ‘Okay, well 95 percent of them did understand this concept so I can go to the next, and I'm just going to have to pull those other students in their recess or something to go over that with them.’ But then there's those times where you thought you just taught it great and they ALL did horrible on the assessment and you're like, ‘Oh, my gosh. I'm going to have to revamp it and do it again, and, you know, in another way.’ And try to do that. And so, those, you know, short assessments every week or every other week or whatever allow me to do that, um. And I always look at it and see, you know, how they did as a whole. And it can be as easy as looking just down my grade book, ‘Oh, my gosh. There's a lot of Ds in there, a lot of Cs. I really think I need to touch that again and in a different way.’ (p. 42)

While Tim indicated that he relied on writing assessments to help him pinpoint student learning needs, "And we kind of assess kids on a monthly basis on a process piece [of writing] to kind of help inform, you know, our teaching and - and - and see, you know, where students' needs lie," (p. 3). Meanwhile, Philip volunteered that when he wants to find out where his students are in their learning comprehension, he creates a "quick" assessment.

I may be completely off, and so from time to time, I will notice that maybe a student is not necessarily understanding, just by their demeanor, um, the work they're exhibiting. And so, I might just throw in a very quick, um, assessment to see exactly if they've been getting, uh, what I've been trying to teach them. Basically, if they're achieving the objectives, and that will let me know if I need to really re-teach something, or if they've already got it and I just really need to move on. (p. 3)

Classroom assessment philosophy summary.

Teachers expressed their individual beliefs either about the purpose of classroom assessment: to further student learning, inform instruction, help motivate students and, perhaps, fulfill program requirements. In addition, seven teachers also expressed the concept that classroom assessments should be designed to accommodate individual student characteristics. Five teachers stipulated, in addition to the previous two individual philosophies on the same topic, that one purpose of classroom assessments was to inform instruction.

Teachers' Reported Perceptions of Classroom Assessment Practices

The question teachers were asked to respond to was "How do you assess student learning?" Presented statements include their direct responses to the question, as well as statements throughout the interviews that referenced their ways of assessing. Teachers appear to give both scripted and non-scripted classroom assessments, dependent upon the academic subjects that district administrators have determined require scripted curricula. That is, even if

teachers administer scripted assessments in some subjects, they may administer non-scripted assessments in other subjects.

It appears that the scripted curricula allow some teacher discretion as to the type of assessment question format that teachers may use to assess learning. Therefore, when teachers mention that they use informal, open-ended or problem-solving questions, these questions may be from the scripted curricula as well as from their own portfolio of preferred classroom assessment types and formats. Unfortunately, I did not know when I began the interviews what I discovered when I ended the interviews: that, at least sometimes, in scripted curricula, teachers have an option of type of assessment question to give students. Therefore, I did not seek to clarify during the interviews when teachers discussed different types of assessments, whether, for example, the open-ended question was in relation to scripted or non-scripted assessments. Consequently, the data is messy. I do not know if, for example, an open-ended question pertains to a scripted or a non-scripted assessment. Therefore, the different types of assessment formats presented later as a table in this chapter simply represent different types of assessments that teachers do and open-ended questions, for example, cannot necessarily be interpreted as part of a teacher created non-scripted examination. It may be part of a scripted examination. Unless the teacher specifically said that she created the questions based upon what she considered to be important, such as Philip's critical thinking questions, assessment formats cannot be considered to be non-scripted just because traditionally they have been.

Even the term "teacher generated" in terms of classroom assessment requires careful interpretation. Traditionally, teacher generated referred to assessments that teachers created on their own based upon what topic they were teaching in the classroom. There are some types, such as Marissa's dioramas, that appear to be teacher generated in the traditional sense of the word.

However, when Jocelyn, for example, revealed that she creates her own exams, she also disclosed that she generates exams by selecting questions from the curricula's "Test Generator" based upon which chapters she has taught. So, when a teacher says that she generates her own exams, she may actually mean she selected, rather than she created the questions - an important distinction.

Teachers' described forms of classroom assessment constitute three main categories: those that are teacher identified as scripted, regardless of whether teachers have been granted more or less discretion by their school administrators in administering the district-mandated program; those that are teacher identified as formative assessment; and other. Other includes the different types of assessment formats, without interpretation as to whether they are scripted or not.

Formative assessment is presented as defined, interpreted and used by the teachers. I originally conceived of formative assessment as the term was used by Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b, 2004) to mean any assessment that uses the assessment results to further student learning with the idea that the assessment results would be examined to see where student learning lay in relation to the target goal or standard. Accordingly, from that location in "the gap" between the location of the target goal and where student learning actually was, a plan of learning would be established for the individual student in order to bring him closer to, if not, actual mastery of the target goal. However, formative assessment also appears to be how testing companies have positioned and labeled their standardized, or scripted, curricula assessments. Therefore, as with types of formats and teacher generated assessments, formative assessment must be considered strictly from a teacher-referenced point of view.

Scripted curricula and assessments.

Based upon their statements, eight of the 11 teachers indicated that they teach at least one subject using a scripted curriculum. These are Marissa, Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Mark, Lorna, Jocelyn and Magdalena. I do not know based upon the interview statements whether either Ashley, or Mijael, teach a subject using a scripted curricula; based upon his discourse on assessment, Corwin does not appear to do so. Marissa appears to employ a scripted curricula for Math. Her initial response related to scripted assessments.

It depends, um. Some Math assessments are, um, are already in our program. We have investigations, and it's more problem-solving, um, things, and, um, they actually - The cool thing about them is that it goes with our Math data folder, because they have formative assessments built into their units. So, do a check here, do a check here, and then they have an end-of-the-unit assessment. um, So, that - it's really cool that our Math program matches that, our goal. (pp. 16-17)

Reading, included with Math in her direct response to the question, also, appears to be scripted despite involvement of students in the rubric creation process.

With Reading, um, we have - it used to be up - At the beginning of the year, we came up with what a good reader is, and then the kids made up a rubric of what good reading should look like. They made it up, so they have fluency, you know, and can't say all the words right, and you know, intonation, you know, makes little voices for different characters or you know, that they had their own definition for things, um. (p. 17)

Although the school has a scripted math and reading program, Phillip indicated he, as well as other teachers at his school, enjoys a measure of flexibility with it.

Um, they [named school administrators] DON'T want us using a program, a Math program, or a Reading program that's scripted to the point that we lose our identity as teachers, you know. Um, a scripted program is one thing, but being - having the flexibility and, um, what's the word I want to say? appreciating the - our professionalism and the skills and the knowledge that we bring in, the experiences that we bring in, to ALLOW us to take what we're supposed to be teaching, blend it with our philosophies, blend it with our teaching styles, and then deliver it to the students in a way that the students UNDERSTAND and can TEACH us how they understand BETTER. And then allow us that - that

flexibility to, you know, re-teach in a way that they get it, um, is tremendous! To have that kind of support is - I can't - you know, I speak volumes of it! (p. 16)

In his previous statement in School Classroom Assessment Philosophy, Tim indicated that he uses "Everyday Math," a scripted Math program. Like Tim and Marissa, Cecilia said she teaches Math using a scripted program.

Um, but then if it's like an assessment - We have - our Math program's Everyday Math. And actually I just learned that the assessments we give them at the end of units can be both formative and summative, because a part of it is an assessment, a section that's gonna - It's like a pre-preview to the following unit, and so that'll inform you how the children are doing, but then the other - another section is summative. And we didn't know that, because I used to - the kids would take this test, and then I would grade it based on that rubric and do the whole thing, and a lot of the times the kids were not doing good at all. You know, that's just - that's kind - that's another situation with assessments. We have a new program, we're just learning it, you know, that comes a part of it as well. Umh-hmmm, and that's, you know, that's what last year was, and we're - this is just our second year in this new Math program. But we're still learning, and I learned a LOT this - I was at a little math training for a week and, um, so (pp. 15-16)

Mark not only teaches Math and Science using a scripted program, but he finds it problematic and said some other teachers do, too.

there are plenty of people who are happy that we have out-of-the-box instruction now after No Child Left Behind and that the assessments are included in the box and you simply pull it out. You hand it to the kids, they do the assessment, it's evaluated, and that's it. I, and there are other teachers, who are disappointed with that, uh, and we're sort of in the stage right now where we're deciding what to do about it....But these that are periodic assessments throughout the classroom that are - that are direct assessments on what the kids have JUST learned and are, or aren't to, you know, to varying degrees applying them to their general, uh, learning. Those, um, assessments ARE valuable to teachers, and we use them as such. So it IS an assessment if that's the purpose would be the general philosophy....And then we've been struggling since 2002 what to do, because we're told what assessments to give, we're told when to give them, uh. We're told that you can't depart from them, that this is - this is it and, you know. So, what do you do as a professional? Um. So, there's some teachers who do a lot of undermining of that, you know, process and circumventing of that process. There's others who are obedient and compliant and rule followers, and they will do EXACTLY what they're told EVEN THOUGH, um, if they stopped to think about it in their better judgment they wouldn't. Applying this assessment in this situation would not be the best thing to do, um ... a scripted, you know,

curriculum, which more and more, um, we have. I mean I have boxes, uh, there's a box right there - out-of-the-box reading assessment. There's a box in back of you - out-of-the-box Science curriculum and assessment, and those boxes over there - Math, out-of-the-box Math, um, curriculum and assessment. And the only one that's not out of a box - because I can't imagine how they'd do it - is Writing. But even those assessments are directly, um, dictated, uh, by the district, and so - And it went from none of that to now that's all you have....So, um, that's where we are right now. We're just kind of in this, you know, how loyal are we going to be to these assessments that are handed to us, you know....Plus, from the White House all the way down to every principal in every school - at least in [name of his district] - you ARE told, um, this term - program fidelity - and to do what the box says. Um, this comes from, uh, the fact that No Child Left Behind was born largely out of a mistrust of teachers and a conclusion that teachers are the problem in education. And if we can just, uh, marginalize - we can't get rid of teachers because we need them. If we can marginalize teachers though and get them, uh, to do what WE want them to do, um, then, uh, if we can only get to the kids and sort of push the teachers to the side, then we can improve education in America. And so that's - this is the mechanism by which they do it, is by handing teachers now - We're just implementers of curricula that's developed, you know, elsewhere; handing teachers these boxes of, uh, learning and then we open them up and implement them, um. The idea being that, you know, maybe you could hand this some day to a chimp who could do the same thing. So, it shows, um, incredible disrespect for the teaching, uh, profession.(pp. 15-20)

Lorna explained that her school has four types of assessments that it employs. She, however, noted that, "now pretty much every school is failing, because the standards of NCLB as they're set up, it's a losing game," (p. 9). The first is the district standards-based assessment, which, she said, it uses as a baseline to establish what the students know throughout the year, "But all the other assessments are assessments that we have compiled as a fifth grade team," (p. 66). Included in these "other" assessments are the second type, or unit tests, which derive from the district programs, which she described as formative. The third are end of chapter, or year, summative assessments and the fourth is a social type of analysis, or assessment. Lorna said she and her colleagues may choose, adapt or modify the unit assessments.

Uh, the second type of assessment we do as we're working through units - however, those units are defined within each of the subject areas. For example, in Literacy, they would be defined by a book study that we're doing. We're working on this story or that story. In Math, it would be one of the nine units....Um, in

Science and Social Studies, it would be one of the units that we study....Um, what the assessment looks like depends on the subject, depends on the lesson, depends on the activity. We use a myriad of assessments, um, - a myriad of formative assessments. (pp. 67-68)

That Jocelyn also teaches Math used a scripted curricula seems implicit in her statement.

Because of the way that everything is now and you have to teach to the standards, you know, un, the book doesn't always follow along. You have to kind of jump around in the book, so you can't give a chapter test if you haven't taught the whole chapter, because you've only done certain lessons out of it. Um, so we create our own assessments, you know, based on those and we would grade that....And so just - and then also one of the nice things that - even the Math that we did last year - The new Math series actually allows you to CREATE a test based on just the lessons you taught. So, the company's actually making it a little easier for us in that sense, that you're teaching certain lessons, and so I can pull a test. Like if there's eight lessons in a chapter but I want to assess these first three lessons that I did, I can create the test. It's a test creator. Test Generator is what the program is called, or something, and so they will - It allows me to pick just those lessons, just those standards that I taught and - It has questions. There's a question bank. There's a question bank from the company, so - and so sometimes we'll use that as well, and I've used that. I used that last year. Um. (pp. 11-13)

Magdalena teaches Reading using a scripted curricula and assesses with a scripted classroom assessment.

We need to do the Houghton-Mifflin Reading assessment....That's the assessment from the program....Everybody must. Everybody must use this program and everybody must do the test....Everytime that we finish a reading, for example, we finish *Akiak*, I do the test, these one. (pp. 4-5)

Formative classroom assessment.

Teachers' interactions with formative classroom assessment is a key focus of this research project. Therefore, I was especially interested when teachers began discussing formative assessment on their own initiative. As noted, teachers' perceptions of formative assessment appear to relate to the scripted curricula that they are required to utilize in instruction. Accordingly, my discussion of research findings on formative assessment begins with teachers' descriptions of what formative assessment means to them. Their definitions are followed by their

responses to my questions on how they use the formative assessment practices of feedback, questioning, peer assessment, and self assessment.

Teachers' definitions of formative assessment.

Based upon teacher discourse, formative assessment appears to be a "check-in" mechanism to provide information to students and teachers on the state of student learning. For example, Marissa defined formative assessments as follows,

Oh, formative tests are, um, like, uh - let me think....Um, so a formative test would be like the test that we do once a week and it's timed. So, they have like five minutes to complete a sheet of - of addition or subtraction problems. And so then they check them to see how many they've done and how many they got correct....That's a formative test. It's something that you're doing just to check in. How are you doing? Are you practicing? Are you learning? (pp. 9-10)

Earlier when Philip described his school's philosophy on classroom assessment, he implied formative assessment was a school-wide endeavor. When I asked him to describe what he meant by formative assessment, he responded,

It's, um, for me it's checking in with the students to see how they're doing at this very point in time, to see what kind of difficulties they may be having with a specific concept. It's not an overall assessment. (p. 3)

Cecilia responded with a similar conception both for her teaching and for her students.

Well, it can give a teacher information. Uh, it can give them like information to what they learn and what they need to still learn; um, how well that unit went; how well you were able to teach; and uh, maybe connect to them 'cause a lot of the times that's the problem. They're not connecting to what they're learning, especially Math nowadays is different, um, or as one session is, it's a preview to the following unit. And that will give you information as, 'oh, this child - the - my class as a whole they do know this, they know that, but all of them got this one wrong. Obviously that's something I need to go back and'. (p. 17)

Lorna corroborated the use of formative assessment to check on student learning. "The formative assessment is to check for comprehension and that they're getting it, that they're understanding it

as we work through, will be by making predictions at the beginning, um," (p. 23). Tim added that formative assessment was used individually to help student learning.

that's one way in which formative assessment kind of helps inform our instruction and helps kind of give kids a better idea as to – you know what I mean – where they need to individualize their own sort of course of action in a sense. (p. 38)

And Mijael explained that formative assessment checks on student understanding.

we've utilized the practice books for comprehension, and that would be more like I would say what they call formative assessment. That's to check to see if they're understanding the concept, and then – then we do, um, like a end-of-story or end-of-unit assessment, like a vocabulary and comprehension to see if they understood it. (p. 6)

He also indicated that formative assessment is contained within a practice book, where students may practice. He did not specify what they practice: skill or construct, development. Magdalena, who teaches in a separate district than Mijael, described how she used the "practice book."

With the practice book also I assess them, with the program. Yeah, it's different, but sometimes the book address the skill, so I – after we repeat and model the skill and do practice book many time is, we can assess in the practice book the skill they are – that they are working. (p. 15)

Lorna's statement, below, like that of Mijael's and Magdalena's, seems to suggest that some of the formative assessments that teachers use may be encapsulated in the mandated scripted curricula.

Uh, the second type of assessment we do is as we're working through units - however, those units are defined within each of the subject areas. For example, in Literacy they would be defined by a book study that we're doing....In Math, it would be one of the nine units....and so while we're working through these different units we do formative assessments, and formative assessments should be very real time. (pp. 67-68)

Similarly, Marissa said that data folders are "used mostly with, like, formative assessment. You know, we do check-ins and the kids graph their progress, and, um, we don't necessarily grade the formative assessments. They kids check their progress and then we give a summative

assessment," (p. 7). Both Marissa and Mijael indicated that they follow formative assessments with either a "subsequent" or an "end-of-unit assessment."

Additionally, Philip and Cecilia characterize formative assessment as, possibly, a separate instrument to check on student learning. Philip said, " Um, so, this, uh reading comprehension check-in, as I said before, sometimes I will check in at random to see if they are understanding the concepts that I'm trying to – to teach them," (p. 79) And Cecilia said,

Sometimes I give the kids – Let's say it's an assessment and it's asking a certain thing, that same type but a different question just as practice and I'll base it off of that how well they did. Then I know, and I'm like, I need to change this a little bit. (pp. 54-55)

However, unlike the grade-level teachers, Corwin appears to not yet use formative assessment in his classroom. He said, "there is so much more pressure from district now for me to assess and to have some sort of formative assessment going on for kids in art," (p. 51).

In summary, formative assessments appear to be employed as an informal, even practice, exercise designed to "check" student leaning for level of comprehension, but not used as a formal, or systematic, measure of or for student learning. Formative assessment, as part of a scripted curriculum, also appears to be, at least sometimes, contained within a student practice book. It may also be presented by some teachers to gauge the level of student learning.

Feedback.

Feedback, like questioning, peer assessment, self assessment, and the formative use of summative assessment, is one of the practices often used alongside formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 2003). I define feedback as information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, or experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback may be considered to be integral to formative assessment, but *how* it

is given and received is part of what determines its level of effectiveness: positive, negative or none (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

As with some teachers who defined formative assessment in terms of its use as a "check-in" technique, Lorna defined formative assessment and assessment, generally, in terms of feedback. "It's (formative assessment) like a feedback loop. And that's what assessment's really about" (p. 26). Eight teachers, in addition to Lorna, said that they use feedback: Philip, Tim, Ashley, Mark, Jocelyn, Magdalena, Corwin and Mijael. Philip articulated its significance. "But, um, feedback is ABSOLUTELY important," (p. 57). Cecilia, Mark, Jocelyn and Magdalena indicated they frequently gave feedback. Jocelyn said, "As far as giving feedback to them and reflection and those types of things? Yes. Yes. We do that, or I do that, um, a lot," (p. 74). Magdalena said she gave it, " Always. Always," (p. 17). Cecilia said, "Um, feedback ALL the time when I'm scoring. Writing, reading, even math, always," (p. 78). And Mark said, "Oh, yeah, it's [feedback] constant. Constant, all day long," (p. 69).

In addition to frequency, teachers also discussed forms and ways of giving feedback. Mijael indicated that he gave feedback individually. "I'm teaching, and it's individual, and I'm not – I'm not singling them out by saying, oh, you know, so, they like that," (p. 23). Ashley suggested that feedback be so immediate that students would be able to say, " 'I've really learned something here 'cause I can see it in my assessment,' and also provide them immediate feedback where they can see IMMEDIATELY where they are achieving and maybe where they should work a little harder," (p. 47). And although he may not give district-recognized or -sanctioned formative assessments, Corwin indicated that he gives feedback carefully when he assesses students' art projects. He said,

I look for positives and try to encourage everything I see that is positive, and then I'll ask them, 'Do you want suggestions?' especially with the older ones that I can

talk to them more that way. When they say 'Yes', then I say, 'This is what I would do.' Or 'Have you ever thought about - ? Or 'Would you think about this?' The whole idea is my feedback – I don't want my feedback to be just my didactic me telling them what they need to do. What I want my feedback to be – if I can, if it can work and if I have the presence of mind to do it in the moment – is to ask them questions about how they would change it. (pp. 59-60)

According to Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b), feedback helps students close "the gap" between their learning and the learning target, or standard. Magdalena asserted that she addresses " the gap." "Okay, so I address the gaps of my student here, not to the parents," (p. 33). Asked to elaborate on how she addresses the gap, she replied,

Oh, for example, when they don't understand one skill. I - that's why I do group levels. If they don't understand I start working here in class with them, with intensive, so reteach....For example, in - This week in Math will be, uh, decimals, okay? If they don't address that skill I will know – I will know for the test, the assessment, and then if they don't address, I start working with them, you know, to close that gap....If they don't address decimal, I know no address this skill. Okay, I will do it in a small group. I know by the test – for [Pearson] Scott Foresman [curriculum and assessment publisher]. (pp. 33-34)

As far as type of feedback, seven teachers said they provide written feedback: Marissa, Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Jocelyn, Magdalena and Mijael. Cecilia said she provided students with "their own individual note," (p. 78). Although at first, Magdalena said she did not give written feedback, she also said that she has "one on one with them and I put many things written on the paper," (p. 18). In describing how he gives written feedback, Mijael said,

And so, I always, you know, on the margins or on the thing I write back and I say, 'I really like this. Always, you know, something positive about their writing, say, 'But I notice, that, you know, you're forgetting to put periods or you're not capitalizing, you know. You might want to look at that.' (p. 23)

Jocelyn's statement was similar, except she said she also seeks their feedback.

If I'm going to give them constructive criticism on a paper, I always try to do a positive as well, and probably first, you know, whatever it may be but, um, I believe in constructive criticism for myself. If somebody sees that I'm doing - Hey, I mean I don't care if you come in and observe a lesson of mine, and you - and you come and you tell me, you know, um, and especially if it's in a positive

way, hopefully. But, you know, 'I saw this, and this was a great job you were doing or whatever, but in this area you might try this.' Oh - I'm always open for ideas, and so I think we need to teach our kids that as well. Um. So, I do give them feedback. Um, sometimes I'll ask for their feedback on something as well, um....And so every now and then, and I haven't done it a whole lot, but I have done it in the past. And I'll ask them, 'You know, what part of my teaching, what helps you learn better? Which part of what I'm doing? Does it help you?' (p. 75)

Six teachers said they provide verbal feedback: Philip, Tim, Ashley, Mark, Magdalena and Mijael. Six said they provide both forms of feedback. Magdalena disclosed how she engages students in verbal feedback. "I have like – for example, today, I give like a meeting each, one on one, you know, but real fast, and then realize, ok. Verbally, yeah, verbally," (p. 17). And Mark illustrated how he said he gives both types of feedback in a situation.

Conference. We conference all the time, and then it's verbal feedback. Plus I put a sticky note on their story, and as I mention things that they might want to look at again I might write them down. So, um, I mean I just write like a little note. Like so if they need to, um, pay more attention to spelling I write, you know *deletreo*, or punctuation, - *puntuacion* - whatever the appropriate – you know. Or sometimes with some kids that's too general, so periods - *los puntos finales* – you have no periods, you know, so find out where they go. So, and it's individual and one on one (p. 71)

He went on to portray how student characteristics and teacher-student relationships play a role in feedback giving. And, he said, some students seek it more than others.

Yeah – but it would – I'd say that's mostly, um, very much mostly determined by interpersonal relationships and personality and less by any other factors in the child's life. So, um, I mean unless there's something more, you know, the feedback –feedback is often determined by the student actually, because there's the kids who follow you around all day, um, um, uh, prodding you for feedback and then those that don't. So something you have to do conscientiously as a teacher is to make sure that you're giving feedback to everyone and not just those who are following you around. AND, interestingly enough, I've noticed over the years, and I don't know if other teachers say this too, those who are seeking the feedback are the ones who least need it. They know they're doing well, and so they keep asking you because it makes them feel good and they're told all the time that they're doing well. Maybe that's one reason why they do do well, because people tell them all the time you know. I've noticed that and I've even talked – had to talk- speak explicitly to the class about that very issue – that, um, 'If you genuinely need feedback and you need my time and all that, then, you

know, come and seek it. But, um, think, be cognizant of how much feedback you're seeking and remember that there are kids in the class who also need feedback.' So, it's my gentle way of saying, 'Stop following me around' to some kids without, you know, um, pointing them out or saying their names. So, that's an interesting phenomenon and so, but teachers are usually pretty good at that. They know the little wallflower who's not coming up, you know. (pp. 69- 70)

In summary, teachers, reportedly, employ feedback frequently, in various forms - verbally and written - and sometimes both, as well as immediately, carefully and individually. One teacher uses feedback to 'close the gap,' at least one teacher seeks student feedback, and one teacher finds student characteristics and relationships to play a role in giving student feedback.

Questioning.

I define questioning as a learning-oriented inquiry employed by teachers, or students, to elicit information from the student on his cognitive level of understanding of a particular learning target, or of a particular step, or steps, on the way to that learning target. Eight teachers said they question students as a routine part of their assessment and instructional practice: Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Ashley, Mark, Lorna, Magdalena and Mijael. One other teacher disclosed that she was looking forward to enhancing her use of questions with the aid of an instructional specialist.

Teachers reported how they used questioning. Tim said he used questions to determine whether the class understood a particular lesson.

No, I mean questioning is part of – is part of the way in which we do assessment and – well, more so, I guess would be formative as – you know what I mean? There's things – I mean even more so after a simple mini lesson, um, you know, just trying to gauge, you know – Questioning is something that – is a strategy that's used. I mean, you know, 'Who's 100 percent on this? you know, Who's, you know, Who's definitely clear? Who's still kind of – Who's around the top of the fence? You know, so Who needs it?' Yeah, so I guess, yeah, questioning's a very – a very common strategy. (p. 41)

Mijael's reported a similar purpose, except that he questioned in Spanish.

One thing I do whole class is if there's – if I've covered something, let's just take the writing prompt, and it was in Spanish. I say *Todos los entienden?* [Does

everyone understand?] And if I feel like I'm getting those blank like – so I tell them, 'Okay, if you understood it, if you know what you need to do, I say count to three, look at me, do this. If you need clarification, do that.' And so, then those who has this – then I say 'Okay.' And then I say, 'Let's get started.' And then I'll pull them aside and say, ' Okay, this is what we're doing, you know, um, do you understand, do you need more clarification?' (pp. 46-47)

Meanwhile, Philip, like Mark, said that he uses questions to engage students in critical thinking.

"I believe in asking a lot of open-ended questions that lead toward conversations and discussions that will further their understanding of what's going on, um, and engage them in the whole critical-thinking process," (p. 61). Mark, who administers "out-of-the-box" assessments, advocated the use of teacher-created questions. He detailed his perspective on the use of questioning, which he views as "synonymous" with his way of teaching.

Questioning is another one of those constants. It's happening every minute of every day, so you're doing it as - individually with students, in small groups and in large groups, so um. And sometimes the questions aren't - you're not seeking an answer. You're seeking for the child to go deeper into what the focus is. So, you say things like, 'tell me more about that. So, tell me more about what you just learned, you know, rolling that marble down the ramp. Or, 'Tell me - tell me a little bit more about what you observed when you combined those two mystery liquids into the same vial. 'Um, it turned purple.' 'Did you notice anything else?' So, I mean questioning techniques that lead the student along, you know, um, to greater depth of understanding. Literature is a perfect example that you're constantly doing that, so you know, so 'Why do you think Jimmy did that, you know? Why didn't Jimmy run right home and immediately tell his mom what happened? Um, was there something that happened earlier in the story that might, you know.' So, I mean the questioning technique's used in literature, you know, and then more general, uh, questions about it. But I mean it's CONSTANT and yeah, I mean that pretty much defines teaching, I would say, is posing the question. However, there are plenty of people I think, you know, still from the old school who don't think that the teacher asks the questions, the students do. And so the teacher gives the answers, and learning is finite and, you know, that old school "Here's what you need to know ' - that sort of lecture format. 'Here's what you need to know. Now remember it and I'll give you a test on Friday.' Um - And not a lot of questioning techniques, so when you're asking questions your assumption is that, um, human beings have the capacity to know something and you're just getting it out of them. Um, when you're just giving them information, um, you know, that's not. Now there is a place for that. If someone asks you an informational question, heck, give the answer. I mean, you know, why not, but as a strategy you want to use questioning techniques. I mean that's - I'd say that's

almost synonymous with teaching, but I may be making an assumption, you know, that other people don't make. (pp. 83-84)

And Lorna said she employed the "ACE structure" in her projects to facilitate higher-level cognition in students.

Um, the ACE structure are a series of cognitively challenging questions work well when you want a child to reason about a certain performance standard in Science or Social Studies, to give their opinion or their comments and to be able to back up what they're thinking with citations and so on. Um, the same is true of a research paper. You would want them to be delving deeper, so asking, um, asking guiding questions would be really important. (p. 69)

Ashley, who said, "I question constantly, constantly," (p. 97) specified different types of questions that she said she teaches students.

Questions are so important. I think that's - there's different levels of questioning as well. And I teach kids about different levels of questioning. There's what we call recall questioning, and the kids understand these words. They understand these academic terms, and I'll ask them. I'll help them identify by modeling, you know. Is this a recall question? Is it something that we can just find the answer to? Is it right there in front of us? Um, is it an inference question? A question that you have to put yourself in someone else's shoes and try to answer based on - it's more of a - of a detective kinda question? Do you have to really search for hidden clues, or is it a prediction question? Is it one that you have to use what you know, that you have to put yourself in someone's shoes or something's shoes and predict what will happen logically in the end? And so I teach kids about those three different kinds of questions ... we always start every unit with something called, a um, an inquiry chart. Everything's based on inquiry. They know what the word inquiry means(pp. 97-98)

Cecilia, like Magdalena, said she questioned students individually and in small or large groups.

So, - well, I've done it ALL – everything, the whole group, the small group, the individual. There's times I'll be walking around and I see something and I'll ask them a certain question, just for that one child, and then they'll tell me what they need to tell me, whether it's okay or not okay. And then maybe they said something wrong and then I'll go back and give a brief little explanation on whatever it is, but there's times, it's a WHOLE group. Um, sometimes, it's just within smaller groups when they're doing projects and I'm walking around and specific groups have different – I have to go and 'Are you sure? But look at this again and let's – it might be just that one, so it's - . (p. 81)

Meanwhile, Jocelyn mentioned that she was looking forward to working with an instructional specialist this upcoming year in order to learn more about how to ask students to ask questions during their literature readings. Those questions would reflect their understanding of what they read, which she could assess.

In short, teachers said they use questioning to identify the number of students who understand a particular teaching; to teach students about questions; and to elicit higher-level thinking in students. Teachers said they question students as individuals and in small and large groups. One teacher characterized questioning as "synonymous" with teaching and two additional teachers said they questioned frequently and one teacher expressed the desire for teachers to be able to create more of their own questions.

Peer assessment.

Like feedback and questioning, peer assessment is one of the formative assessment practices identified by Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b, 2003) as effective in furthering student learning. They associate both peer and self assessment with student autonomy, or students taking responsibility for their own learning, a central feature of formative assessment (Black & Wiliam; 1998a, 1998b; 2003). Although self assessment and autonomy may be the ultimate goal, peer assessment is a steppingstone toward that milestone. Through dialogue with a peer, students may become more in touch with the learning target and their learning performance, thereby, ideally, arriving at a deeper understanding of their own level of comprehension and learning needs.

I define peer assessment as mutual student assessing of learning. Assessment may be informal, with or without a rubric, and may or may not result in scores, but an evaluation of student learning takes places and that evaluation is communicated between students for the

purpose of furthering student comprehension, or mastery, of particular topics, concepts, skills, standards or learning targets.

Teachers' use of peer assessment.

I asked teachers whether they used peer assessment in their classrooms. Depending upon the term, seven to nine teachers said that peer assessment was a part of their assessment practice. Overall, teachers indicated that they use peer assessment with various academic subjects, but it was not clear why a "peer review" or a peer grading did not constitute peer assessment.

Informal.

For some, such as, Corwin and Magdalena, peer assessment is an informal practice. Corwin said, "There's a lot of informal peer assessment going on. I encourage kids to talk to each other," (p. 35).

Spelling and math.

Magdalena said that she "always" uses peer assessment (p. 43) and described how she does so.

I do like games with them. Assessment in Spelling, or in times tables. Okay, assess each other. But I don't take as a grade for me. No, but they like it. So, they are learning. They assess each other in Math and Spelling. (p. 43)

Like Magdalena, Mijael said, he also uses peer assessment in games, math and spelling. His quote suggests that he uses peer assessment in conjunction with the scripted math curriculum.

Yeah, um, with our Math program, you know, the teacher guide dictates us to – There's always activities that are individual, pair or group, so to me that's a wonderful time to – When they're working in groups, I think they're assessing and make sure that everyone is doing what, you know, they're supposed to do and doing their part. (p. 38)

Both Mijael and Magdalena teach in different districts but their statements suggest that they implement peer assessment quite similarly.

"Fluency."

Marissa indicated that her students peer assess to check reading speed and to score oral presentations. "They present orally, and I can hear them and the kids hear them and they get to score each other, and then I get to score them too," (p. 30). She described how students peer assess "not speed reading," but "fluency."

We also do for, I guess, not speed reading. It don't – it's not that. It's, um, I guess it would be fluency as well. I – they read, um, out loud for about a minute and they, um, after the minute's up, they check where they left off and then they count how many words they read. Um, to see if they've moved up or down. But again, that's all, um, for their own knowledge. (p. 18)

Peer editing in writing.

Philip, Cecilia, and Mark said that students use peer editing extensively in reviewing their written work. Mark's quote below exemplifies these teachers' process.

but they also do a lot of peer editing. So, in fact, in fact, they have to do peer editing in most of their written work before they can even see me. And the peer who edited their work has to sign, literally sign off on it, on their notebook in a colored pen or pencil, um. And if I don't see that signature in the story by the time they come to me, I won't edit it. I won't look at it, because they have to pass through a peer first. So, they simply ask someone else to read their writing and offer suggestions. And we have – we use regular editor symbols, um, so they get two editors by the time they – at least by the time they get to their final draft – a peer and then the teacher. So, especially at this age. Younger ages that would be harder to pull off, but fourth and fifth grade you can pull that off....They write a rough draft that's looked at twice and then they do the final draft, and then I sign it. I actually sign my initials. Once, I've signed my initials, that's the green light for, 'now go off and write your final draft'. (pp. 71-73)

Collaborative learning - not peer assessment.

Mark, however, added that he does not perceive "offering suggestions" for how students may improve their writing to constitute assessment.

Um, I mean I don't have, I mean kids actually assessing other kids. I mean editing I wouldn't call assessment. I would just say, um, it's cooperative learning. It would not fall under assessment. They're not assessing the other person's writing. (p. 76)

He noted that, at times, students present orally for which the class provides feedback that includes both evaluation and cooperative learning.

Now, also with writing though, another – another way we might do that is, um, uh, now there are a few all-group that we're assessing. When kids give oral presentations of Social Studies projects and that sort of thing, um, then we – we evaluate them giving positive and critical feedback, so, um, so that happens. It's not, um – it's infrequent but it's throughout the school year, so....They might write it down so they - during the presentation so they don't forget, but, um. And then they say, 'I notice that, you know,' so they might say, uh, 'You know, I like the way you blah, blah, blah' or 'Next time you give it' - 'I had trouble hearing you. Next time you give your presentation it might help your audience if, you know' - So, there's positive, and so that's evaluation in a sense, but it's also – that blurs the line between, um, evaluation and cooperative learning where we're all helping each other, you know, learn. (pp. 76-77)

Peer grading/review - not peer assessment.

Jocelyn, who teaches in a different district than Mark, said that although her school district has generally withdrawn the use of peer assessment due to "privacy" and "liability" issues, "sometimes, we'll grade the papers as a whole and they'll – and they'll grade their peers," (p. 82).

Most times when I'll utilize that [peer assessment] is with the writing again because you rated it. 'Now, let's see what somebody else says about your ideas.' ...Why did *you* give it this number and why did *you* give it this number, you know? Did you come to some consensus or did you miss something?...So, they're doing that discussion and they're coming to that consensus, and so that helps them understand the rubric better and what ideas are supposed to look like. (p. 82)

Assembling peers.

Mijael, Tim and Marissa described the pairing of students for peer assessment. For Mijael, it is a matter of student choice.

I give them the option of choosing their partner, but what I tell them is, but it doesn't make sense, you know, sometimes your friend is not the best partner. Because if you're at the same level, whether it be low or high, then, you know, it doesn't – you're not helping each other out, I tell them. You know, because I guess I'm kinda like suggesting again that you partner, you know, someone that

might need help with someone that knows it so that you can help each other out; so you can help them and then they can, you know, they can show you if they understand it or not, because I tell them, you know if you really know something, you can teach it. So you can be sort of like the tutors of the teachers, and they like that. They're like, oh, okay, you know. And they take it seriously, like okay, come on, especially last year, I had one student who was – I was like, 'she'd make a wonderful teacher.' She'd be like, 'Okay, now show me. Okay, what about there, you know?' And the student, the other one, would be like, 'Help Sr. [name]. I don't want to be her partner any more. She's tough.' (pp. 38-39)

However, Tim, whose students also peer assess in writing, indicated that care was needed in pairing students.

And so, I've had kids – and you have to be – kind of be thoughtful about, you know, who's sharing with who. But, I think when two kids have a good relationship and work well together and can engage in that kind of a, sort of an exchange, um. I think is a very powerful tool. Because for one, it helps everyone understand more the criterion against which they're being sort of evaluated. (p. 43)

Marissa said her students remain in the same pairs throughout the year.

Um, so what we do with that is every week – once a week, every Wednesday, they sit in pairs, and it's been the same pairs all year, to watch progress, um. And they check each other off on the rubric, um. 'Oh, so this is how you're doing, you know. This is what you did, and then, um.' (p. 18)

In summary, nine teachers from three districts said they incorporate the concept of peer assessment into their instructional and classroom assessment practices. The label "peer assessment" appeared problematic to at least two teachers. Subjects in which the concept of peer assessment was said to be utilized included: spelling, "fluency", math, reading and writing.

Self-assessment.

The last formative assessment practice to be considered is that of self-assessment, which consists of students evaluating their own learning. Asked whether they employed self-assessment in their classrooms, five teachers said they did: Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Jocelyn, and

Mijael. Two teachers said they did not: Mark and Magdalena. And Corwin said he was moving toward self-assessment.

Tim's description of self-assessment in his classroom reveals that he has students develop their own instructional growth plans and is considering having them take more responsibility for their literacy. His quote also portrays some difficulty in students identifying for themselves where they most need to work and in, possibly, students self-assessing with the new curricular packages.

Our kids keep individual portfolios and so, you know, one of the things that kids are doing, and they've done this a few times this year where they create, um, they're creating individual growth plans. So, they're creating a certain kind of an action plan for what it is that they personally need to address in a particular area. So, you know, if someone's working on, you know, the sort of, the infusion of details into their writing or whether it's conventions or mechanics, you know what I'm saying? These kinds of things, um, that requires of course - . And that's a hard thing for kids I think initially because they want you to say, 'Tell me what I need to do, you know.' And, um, so it's a tough kind of a thing to create, but, um, I think over the course of time kids come to know very well what it is that they do well and what it is that they need to kind of continue to work on and improve. And so, um, yeah, we do that.

I mean, I guess because a lot of our assessments, um, you know, for example, like this Math assessment that comes with a unit, with this new, um, I'm sorry, curricular package that we just adopted it's not the kind of thing that's most conducive - you know what I'm saying - unfortunately to kids kind of sitting down and, you know, the answer to so and so - because I always look. I mean I don't just look at the answers. I'm looking at their process and the method, and so that's a little bit more difficult in a sense. Um....you know literacy tends to be the one that kind of seems to be most conducive to kids. I guess I have a tendency to do - I'm looking at more giving kids work samples and they're keeping a portfolio and having them look at what it is they've done and then trying to make - arrive at some conclusion about, you know, what it is that I need to continue to work on. (pp. 44-46)

Jocelyn's quote illustrates how students self-assess in writing and compare their work to a rubric.

And they assess themselves with, um, like the creating writers, with the writing....We start off with ideas, and it's just different ways of them getting their ideas on their paper, and then they have a rubric...the ones I'm going to show you in a little bit are child friendly. They're in children's terms, and so they'll rate.

After they write it, they'll look at it and they'll say, 'Is this a 1, a 2, a 3 for ideas? Did I put enough ideas or is it just really simple? Um, organization is another. Did I do it from beginning, middle to end? And they're very, um, and the rubrics are kid friendly. Theirs – our – and of course our teacher ones have more detail in them but, um, but it's based on the same things. So, they can rate themselves. And then I will grade it and rate it and they'll – and they know what my rubric looks like as well, so they'll know what that means, um. And then conventions of editing, proofreading, all of those things. Um, word choice is another sixth trait. Um, the words that they use....Um, word choice, sentence fluency. 'Are all the sentences short sentences, or do you have some short and some longer compound sentences?' Those types of things. (pp. 79-80)

Meanwhile, Philip, also, said his students self-reflect and self-assess.

Uh – hmmm Absolutely! I think it's critical for them to, um, use it as a reflection. 'Okay, let me – let me think about what I did and okay, did I do this?' Just to go through the process of looking at their work with a critical eye and see how I did on this, and this is what I think I did, and this is why I think I got it. Of course, some of the kids are like, 'Oh yeah, I'm expert. I'm expert – I'm expert on this.' And so obviously we need to have, you know, further conversations with that. But a lot of the kids have really learned to look at their work with a critical eye. And I've seen a lot of revisions, more than the first or two drafts that were expected, because they start to see that when they begin self –an assessment, like, 'Oh yeah, I'm not even close to a 4-point. I need to add more this or take away that or those kinds of things.' (pp. 56-57)

Both Cecilia and Mijael suggested their students reflect on goals and accomplishments. Mijael

said, "Then, you know, there's always that reflection or there's that, you know, 'How did it go?,'

" (p. 41). Cecilia, said, similarly:

Um – hmmm, plus, they also do a lot of like reflection, how a certain something could have been better or maybe also their goals, and I just – I just actually just – I have a book with different forms for like reflection and setting up classroom, um, individual, my goals. And it'll just be one day and I'll say, 'Okay, well we need to start looking at what we've done the last month, and I want you to let me know how you felt [you did] And then just a copy and then they write. And some of the goals I will actually post on the - in the classroom, but. Yeah, I mean – and it's very informal. It's just for them to think about, um, I guess their progress. (p. 79)

To summarize, five teachers acknowledged that they have students self-assess. Objectives for self assessment ranged from students developing their own individual academic growth plans

to comparing their written work to a rubric and to judgment about one's own level of performance, or comprehension. A summary of teachers' overall formative assessment practices on feedback, questioning, peer and self assessment is contained in the following table.

Table 7. Formative Assessment Practices

Practice	Number of teachers using practice	Names of teachers
Feedback	8	Philip, Tim, Ashley, Mark, Jocelyn, Magdalena, Corwin and Mijael
-written	7	Marissa, Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Jocelyn, Magdalena and Mijael
-verbal	6	Philip, Tim, Ashley, Mark, Magdalena and Mijael
-both	5	Marissa, Philip, Mark, Magdalena and Mijael
Questioning	8	Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Ashley, Mark, Lorna, Magdalena and Mijael
Peer Assessment	7-9	Corwin, Magdalena, Mijael, Marissa, Philip, Cecilia, Mark, Jocelyn, and Tim
Self Assessment	5	Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Jocelyn and Mijael

Other Assessment Formats.

Based upon their narratives, this section describes the various classroom assessment tools, formats and practices teachers use to assess student learning. First, selected quotes portray my interpretation of teachers' most representative type of classroom assessment. Secondly, a table illustrates the various classroom assessment formats that teachers cited (if mentioned by two or more teachers), such as advance organizers, together with one selected quote and the

numbers and names of teachers who indicated that they employ that particular classroom assessment type, or format. If only one teacher referenced that specific type of assessment, it is included and listed under the category "other;" however, only one quote on "other" types of assessment appears.

Representative classroom assessments.

Teachers' narratives are organized by: 1) Non-standard Program Classroom Assessments, and 2) Grade-level Program Classroom Assessments.

Non-standard program classroom assessments.

Non-standard programs include Guided Language Acquisition Design, (GLAD), and the fine arts. In their conversations, both Corwin and Mijael indicated that participation in fine arts subjects influences their manner of assessing learning. Corwin said,

It's [classroom assessment] not that [multiple choice] sort of...It's ah - a very objective on my part. I have to really watch kids the whole time that they are in my class. I have to watch how they're reacting to what I'm asking them to do, how they're reacting to the materials, to the assignments. And then - The big thing is how that reaction changes as they get involved. If their reaction stays overwhelmed, and - then I - I can get a sense that they don't have the capacity to do this yet. Or they've just - you know, I've asked way too much from that individual. They're not developmentally ready to do something that I've asked. And so, a big part of what I have to do is I have to really watch kids.

Assessment for me has to me a visual - a very quiet visual interaction. Lots of conversation. I have to keep talking to kids. When they come and they're really nervous and they're anxious about what they're doing and they're scared, then, it's up to me to show them little tricks to get past - over some barriers and also do lots of encouragement. So, I can watch what's you know - I'm moving around the room constantly. And so, I can see what kind of progress they're making in a day. Or if they're even making progress or if they're even putting in effort. And that's the big thing. If they're not even trying and they're just sitting and slapping things off. Then, you know... But the whole thing is, it's all about observation. It's all about watching kids, seeing what they're doing, what they can do, seeing where they're making jumps. (pp. 43-45)

As an example, Corwin referred to the still life's that he had all the students draw. "If you look, each table has a tiny little still life at the end of it....A still life is just items that they have to draw....Let me try to get you a number of them from one table," (p. 9). Mijael, who teaches at a school that focuses on the fine arts, uses fine arts as a different modality to teach; with fine arts, he said, some students who may not be high academic achievers "shine."

Well, we focus on the Fine Arts, being we have a Music teacher, and it's more chorus based, it's more singing. We have an Art teacher and we have a Drama teacher, so kids here at [name of school], they're not scared of getting up in front of an audience, which I envy that. Since a kid I was, you know, shy. And it's hard to get up in front of a large audience, and so, these kids they're like, 'Oh, when is our play? When - What are we going to do?' But I think that's another way of assessing learning. And I think it allows - and sometimes it's our - our, um, minority students who shine in that, and they really, you know, they take it serious. And where they may be, you know, maybe in the classroom, they're not the top performers and culturally they're, you know, and my culture we're not *se no hace saben todo* [transl: do not act like you know it all] - we don't brag, we don't - We're just kinda, you know, and those kids - but, you know, sometimes - I mean, they shine, and they just show you what they have, and they learn. (end p. 18). One of the things is they learn. (p. 19) (pp. 18-19)

He continued, adding that students not only perform the play, but students develop the theme, or themes, based on the standards, and write it. Sometimes, the play is in Spanish. "But it [the play on the Greek gods] was in Spanish, so it was assessing language. It was assessing, and it was covering our Language Arts standard....One year, I did the Pueblo Revolt," (p. 20).

Ashley, who protested students being assessed "so much," (p. 5, p.12) described how she assesses.

Like I don't create quizzes or exams or anything like that. I assess strictly on the work kids do in classroom. So, um, I don't have like a tool that I have created that I hand out to students that I assess on what I'm teaching. I only use the work that they use, so it's more of a portfolio kind of assessment, and I don't think that's optimal, but I do that because there's SO MANY other assessments that the kids are subjected to, hear the word subjected to. (p. 6)....

And then, she described GLAD.

I'm a certified GLAD teacher, and it involves - It's a scaffolding technique. It's a set of, um, strategies that make the content area accessible to all students regardless of their language levels. And it's very visual and there's a lot of visual cues. And there's a lot of fun, interesting repetition in different ways, and, uh, vocabulary development and, uh, chanting, for example, and a lot of rhyming and poetry and, um, what we call narrative input. And we use giant graphic organizers to teach. Rather than just say 'Open up your book,' we take the book, the information from, for example, the Social Studies unit we're teaching. And we develop posters, big posters or input charts that are sort of graphically organized, in which we've thought ahead of time what we're going to draw there. But in front of the children we talk and we give them a lesson and we DRAW what we're talking about. And then we add to it daily. These are living charts that grow every day and the students add to them as well. And so my idea for assessment since I use this strategy of teaching, I KNOW my students are learning, because I can tell in their work, in their conversations and, you know, in the stories they write and that kind of thing. How they respond to me when I ask them questions and in groups, etc. My idea for assessment would be in my classroom to have students take that model of teaching that I use, and I do do this with them; I experiment with it, and say, 'Okay, I want you to create an input chart on X subject.'...and then teach their small group about that animal so that everyone's learning during assessment....So, it's not just, okay, let's take this time AWAY from curriculum and assess. It's learning and assessing and teaching others at the same moment.....and NO ONE EVEN KNOWS it's assessment. We never say it's AN assessment. It's just an activity. It's a learning activity. (pp. 21-25)

Grade-level program classroom assessments.

After describing his point of view that assessing reading using a computer was not how students either learned to read or engaged reading, I asked Tim what type of classroom assessments he liked to give, what type did he find meaningful? He replied:

And so in the end, you know, if we - if I taught the kids three different strategies to multiply three-digit numbers by two-digit numbers and the kids found a strategy that worked for them and they could show a certain degree of accuracy that would maybe put them at what was proficiency, you know....Here's five problems. If you can show me that you can do these five problems at 80 per cent consistency, then I can leave you alone and sort of - you know what I'm saying - rest assured that, you know, you got it....So, I mean, if you have these kind of, you know, these categories, and you know in your classroom who falls within these, well, then, you know how to set up, you know, your activities, your committees or what you're doing on a daily basis such that you can address those needs versus having to make - You know what I mean. (pp. 19-21)

Philip, who has supported critical thinking questions, the use of turkey parties to teach math, and outdoor germ warfare with students playing the roles of red and white blood cells to teach science, elaborated on his view of classroom assessment. He noted, "I prefer the students to find their own answer in a way that they can, um, best explain it to me, whether it's by doing a project, and I will often," (p. 17). He explained.

Um, I don't like a whole lot of multiple choice. I really don't. Um, I think that multiple-choice assessments, perhaps, have their place. I've yet to figure out if they actually do, you know. That's my personal opinion, um, because it's too much of a guess, um. And I think that, uh, multiple choices can be kind of limiting to the students, because you are telling them there is a right answer in here, you know, Find it. Um, I prefer the students to find their own answer in a way that they can, um, best explain it to me, whether it's by doing a project, and I will often - I'll tell you right now, Tilia. Um, I make things a lot more difficult for myself than I need to, because I will give the students - Oftentimes, I will give the students a choice of how they want to do the assessment. Because again, students learn in different ways. They have different ways of thinking, um, but, ultimately, it's, 'Do they understand what's happening?' and 'Can they communicate that to me?' That is the most important. So if they can - If it's an assessment on, uh, on a scientific concept, for example, maybe it's on potential energy, they can either explain to me, 'What do you know about potential energy and how it works?' And they can write an essay if that's what they want to do, TELL me. Um, 'Mr. [name], I don't know if I can write this down. I don't - 'Okay, SHOW me that you understand - project, build a model, something that demonstrates that you understand the concepts of potential energy and how energy is, you know, passed along and then be able to explain it to me.' (pp. 17-18)

Marissa teaches at a charter school with students whom she has described as both "gifted" (p. 7) and "socioeconomically low," (p. 25).

What I have them do, um, for me is - I like a lot of - they and I like a lot of presentations, and I think it's - They're not afraid to get up and present because of the drama program. They've been presenting since they were in Kindergarten, so they LOVE making Power Points and just going up and using the pointer and, you know, doing (laughs), you know, 'This is the tiger.' And, um, one of my students right now is doing a project with tigers, and she's looking at different tigers and how their population - how they differ in population, um, and it's, you know, for - 'Protect the Tigers' and, you know, all that stuff, um. But she made a graph and she put it on a Power Point, and she has pictures of the different tigers and, um, how they're an endangered species and things like that, so they like informing others, and I think that's the biggest thing. That's how I use my gifted students.

Because they go out and then they come back, so they have enrichment, um, and so I have them do a lot of, um, projects that are - that are to help enrich my other kids' knowledge on things, um, because they tend to be the ones that have an interest in, you know, a lot of endangered species and, um, you know, uh, the environment, or they're the ones that have the classes, um, for, you know, the violin and, you know, things like that, so then they can come in and bring that knowledge in to my other children, um. And I do that with most. I have kids that are, um, really, um, into baseball, you know. I have them make - okay, well, you guys make a Math Power Point with, um, about baseball and compare different, ah, players or different teams....I mean for the most part, they all like presenting, so that's what I - that's what I use. And they love making Power Points. They have gotten so good at them. Um, I think they can do things that some adults couldn't, still don't know how to do on a Power Point. They know how to put a hyperlink on, you know, where they click on it and it takes you right to a website. They know how to embed pictures, um, so, you know, make pictures - make things rotate and whatever, move around on the thing. And so they like that and I use it to my advantage. (pp. 18-20)

Mark said his students come from both "professional" families and families where both the mother and father bus tables at local restaurants.

Um, I wouldn't give different assessments to different kids on the same material. But what I would do is make sure that the assessment that I DID give to everyone was open-ended. So, it's 'Tell me what you know, tell me what you - tell me what you remember about the structure of an atom. You might want to tell me about the parts, um, where they're located and that sort of thing.' So, it could be, um, and the same - The same two children, the upper-middle-class child with professional parents and that sort of thing with all the knowledge advantages and all that, is given the same question as the other child who doesn't have the sort of material help and life experiences and that sort of thing. Um, but, um, they were exposed to the SAME, um, material in the classroom and, um, could give an answer to an open-ended question. So, it's the open-ended nature of it that's important; not that there's - you're not giving discrete answers. So, tell me what you know about an atom. (pp. 52-53)

After disclosing that all, with the exception of two special education, students are doing well on standards-based assessments, I asked Magdalena why that was so, and what did she do to facilitate that. She responded:

The only thing that I do different is that - because before when the reading first program we couldn't write and read in time. What I do different is after we finish all our reading, you know, story, they need to do a summary - a summary everybody, and I grade that also, because is a strong connection, you know, the

reading with the writing. If they - if they understood the reading, they should write the story, you know. They can be capable to do a summary. That's the thing that I do different. For my grades. Not for the school, not for the school. For my own grade. (pp. 6-7)

Cecilia said she preferred "a lot of hands on" [assessments].

In order for them to understand the concept or, or sometimes the skill, um, they need to know what they're - what that means or what they're supposed to do, so, um, a lot of backward planning I do. Um, sometimes in a program, and there's the Math program or, um, maybe in Science, like a Science experiment, um, I'll go back. Science - we don't have an actual formal, like Science, type of assessment-type stuff. I do assessments a lot of - on observations and especially in Science, because there it needs to be a lot of hands on. Maybe some reading on the background or whatever we're doing, but a lot of hands on, um.(p. 19)

Lorna elaborated on how she and her school assess learning based upon the standards.

Performance standards, um, begin with a verb and so it's identify this or that, or describe such and such, or express or, um, show the similarities and differences between so and so. And so after teaching a unit within a certain area, the students should be able to address the performance standard. They should be able to, um, to respond to thank in an appropriate manner....Well, sometimes, teachers will fall into the trap of perhaps teaching to a book, because we buy basals or we buy a Math program or so on and so forth. And instead of viewing those curricular times as tools, um, which should be used to help the students achieve standards, the standards that they have to meet for the school year, instead what teachers start doing is teaching to the series, um, whatever that may be, and using just the assessments that come with the series, and those assessments may or may not be aligned to our standards. So, you have to be very purposeful about how you go through and pick out which stories you're going to teach from the basal, or which chapters from a Science book or a Science kit, or, um, which lessons from a Math program, because the object in teaching is not to take different programs and just start on page 1 and teach straight through. Um, the objective is to teach the standards to the students during the year, and so, it's - and when you go back - What you set up as the expectation at the beginning of the lesson should be how you close the lesson, you know. It shouldn't be a kind of like a 'gotcha' kind of thing; they should match. And so, what you present to the students at the beginning as, 'Okay, this is what I expect from you by the end of when we study this,' um, then what you test them on at the end should match that exactly. It shouldn't *be* something different and it shouldn't *look* different, it shouldn't *sound* different. They should be expecting it, they should know it's coming, and they should know EXACTLY how to show you that they - that they understood the standard, that they understood the content. (pp. 20-22)

Meanwhile, Jocelyn described a classroom assessment method that she appreciates.

And then also one of the nice things that - even the Math that we did last year - The new Math series actually allows you to CREATE a test based on just the lessons you taught. So, the company's actually making it a little easier for us in that sense, that you're teaching certain lessons, and so I can pull a test. Like if there's eight lessons in a chapter but I want to assess these first three lessons that I did, I can create the test. It's a test creator. Test Generator is what the program is called or something, and so they will - It allows me to pick just those lessons, just those standards that I taught and - It has questions. There's a question bank.... You know, I've even allowed the students to ask questions before, um (pp. 12-13)

Summary.

No one method of classroom assessment predominates. Teachers in the GLAD and fine arts programs indicated that they assess learning using tools associated with those programs. For example, Ashley said she assesses using large posters, or graphic organizers. Corwin said he visually evaluated students' art based upon effort and progress. And Mijael reported embedding assessment of subjects, such as, language and writing, within fine arts projects.

Grade-level teachers conveyed the use of an array of different types of classroom assessments including those that: 1) are created based upon what is taught (Tim); 2) permit student format choice to answer the assessment question (Philip); 3) reflect student interest, especially using power point (Marissa); 4) use open-ended assessment questions (Mark); 5) require summary statements (Magdalena); 6) feature hands-on demonstration of learning (Cecilia); 7) align instruction with classroom assessment (Lorna); and 8) permit selecting questions from a test generator (Jocelyn).

Other reported types of classroom assessments.

The table below presents the various types of classroom assessment that teachers reportedly use. Previously discussed assessments are excluded.

Table 8. Teachers' Classroom Assessments

Type of Classroom Assessments	Number of Teachers	Names of Teachers	Assessment Example Quote
-By purpose			
Differentiated	3	Philip, Marissa and Magdalena	"I, um, this child – we read <i>La Leyenda del Sammy</i> , which is a legend about how Puerto Rico came about. It's a legend about how Puerto Rico came about, and so this diorama was about life in the sea. And see, here's a little crab and there's the little fishie. And she made them to where they dangle, so this is her diorama. It's kind – yeah, it's kind of like a picture, like a 3-D picture I guess....Um, but this particular child is very artistic....You know, she dangled one little fish here, um, so that they'd appear to have – to be swimming and have some kind of movement. Um, yeah, but she doesn't like the computer a lot." Marissa (pp. 32-33)
Summative assessment	3	Marissa, Cecilia and Lorna	"I know for projects, and if I'm going to use a big project, like a finalized, um, like a summative assessment, um, that will need to be given a rubric for children to know their expectation." (p. 15) Cecilia
Social	2	Philip and Lorna	"you look at it as, um, an informal assessment as to how well they're doing socially, how well they're doing academically, um, by working with one another and helping each other. So, when one student succeeds, really, it's the whole class that succeeds." (p. 41) Philip
-By format			
Open-ended	3	Mark, Lorna, Corwin	"But the projects are open-ended, um, which is something that's missing in a lot of the out-of-the-box instruction that we have. Therefore, if you don't have open-ended, um, learning, you don't have open-ended, um, uh, assessment, and open-ended is not what the conservative education pundits in America want. They STILL believe that you open a young head and you pour in information, and that learning is finite, and that it would be

			possible maybe to know it all, as was thought in the past. And so open ended is the - is, um, you know, uh, foo foo um, education to those - but those people are in power now, and they're pushing their, um, education - finite education agenda. " (p. 46) Mark
Creates own assessment	10	Marissa, Philip, Cecilia, Ashley, Mark, Lorna, Jocelyn, Magdalena, Corwin, Mijael,	"So, when you do your own themes then, you know, it only makes sense to come up with your own assessment if you're not going by the book which we - In Science and in Social Studies, I think we do more of our own assessments," (p. 29) Mijael
Informal	5	Tim, Magdalena, Mijael, Philip and Lorna	"You know, there's informal assessments that I might do here in class, you know, quick running records." (p. 3) Tim
Observation	7	Tim, Ashley, Jocelyn, Magdalena, Philip, Cecilia and Corwin	""But the whole thing is, it's all about observation. It's all about watching kids, seeing what they're doing, what they can do, seeing where they're making jumps," (p. 45) Corwin
Organizers	4	Philip, Lorna, Mijael, Ashley	"Then, they use a graphic organizer to keep track of their thinking, specifically with respect to author's purpose and point of view." (p. 23) Lorna
Projects (PerformanceA)	10	Marissa, Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Ashley, Mark, Lorna, Magdalena, Corwin, and Mijael	"Do they have all the elements? And they know, because that's on their contract, so they know that their project is going to be that 1) they have to research a person. Did they do it or did they not? 2) They have to find like three sources on that person. ...Um, uh, did they create their input chart and did it have all four of the elements that I have been - that I've been modeling for them. And so that would be part of it, and then it's more like a checklist than even a grade, and then did they present it to their group? And did they do their writing assignment and pull together all those things? So is it all there?" (pp. 61-62) Ashley
Performance	3	Philip, Mark and Mijael	"Okay, so it would be a task-based kind of a situation where I would have two or three different objects. They all have the same mass, but they're all at different heights. And so having them be able to

			<p>determine which of those objects, even though they all have the same mass at different heights - which one's going to have the greatest potential energy.</p> <p>Demonstrate to me that – your hypothesis – It's basically doing a science experiment and having them prove to me, demonstrate to me that they understand, um, the concept and they can back up the results.” (pp. 18-19) Philip</p>
Research	6	Marissa, Cecilia, Ashley, Mark, Lorna and Magdalena	<p>"Well, I looked up Science standards and some of them said, um, research different environments of the world, um, characteristics of - I don't know, something....So, I was like, okay, I want them - I think I'm doing this, an animal. They needed to check out a book in the library, read that, then there was, um. Yeah, research an animal. So, I gave them a list of what their expectation was in other words. Then after that I gave them, um, kind of guidelines to a power Point. Every slide needed a specific - needed specific information. That was based on the standards, on the actual concept that they needed. For example, the environment. The - then maps came into place because of the different continents that these animals lived in. What they ate. So, every slide has specific information that they needed to - then there was a presentation at the end. After that there was one question that I asked, and the kids wrote it as an ACE rubric. " (pp. 69-70). Cecilia</p>
Portfolios	3	Tim, Ashley and Mark	<p>"I have an idea of what I want them to say, and I try to guide them there, but the children fill it in as we go. So, we build this on the wall, and then the kids actually make their own map and their portfolio and they add to it. 'They don't just do what I do. They add to it. If they think something about Josefina that she - maybe something in her story. Like she had to face the risk, or she had a challenge of overcoming her fear of the goat on the</p>

			farm, and maybe that really appeals to them. They want to write about that. So, it's not - they're not just copying what I do. They create their own. They use mine as a model and as a - like a platform to build on. It's a living map that grows." (pp. 53-54) Ashley
Journals	2	Jocelyn, Mijael	"But back to like the quick write. It's just a quick assessment of, you know, 'What did we learn in Math?' Just a couple of sentences that I can look at and he can say, 'Oh well, we're talking about place value. And I know that if it's in the hundred thousandths place, if a six is in the hundred thousandths' place, well, then its value is 600,000.' Something as easy as that. 'Okay, well I think you got THAT part; so now, you know.' 'As a whole, how many got that?' So, that I know I need to review that tomorrow or can I go on? I need to review that tomorrow or can I go on? So, it can be as simple as just a quick write. And so some days I'll tell them, 'Leave your Math journal open on your desk cause I'm going to read it today after school.' And then, I'll just make a quick little comment." (pp. 28-29) Jocelyn
Individual conferencing [one on one discussion]	6	Tim, Ashley, Mark, Jocelyn, Magdalena and Mijael	"During that [reading] time, I have individual reading conferences with the kids, you know. And I have them, you know, I have them do various activities - 'Read to me, tell me what's going on.' And I guess they write questions, like, you know, 'So, what do you think of the, you know, so what do you think of the story, you know. Tell me about the author, or I mean, about the main character.' Or just probing questions." (p. 48) Mijael
Verbal, oral presentations	9	Marissa, Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Ashley, Mark, Jocelyn, Magdalena and Mijael	"I use presentations a lot for everything, and I think it's - it's because, it covers - it covers so much if - if - done right I think, um, because you get oral presentation. They present orally, and I can hear them and the kids hear them and they get to score each other, and then I get to score

			<p>them too. Um, they have something in writing, um. They have to read something to be able to present. Um, and then, if, you know, if it's a Science thing or Math, even a History thing, they can always have graphs or charts at some point, so it covers Math. For me, it just feels – it feels like it covers – there's so much, um, that I kind of exploit presentations a little, um, for that reason" (pp. 30-31)</p> <p>Marissa</p>
Higher order questions	3	Philip, Tim, Mark and Lorna	<p>"But, as I said, inferencing is also one of those things, and I want them to engage in a little bit more critical thinking. As I write here, one of the questions says, um, 'Weijo made some decisions in the passage. Using sequencing, the correct order of events, write down some of the decisions that [he] made; then write about what YOU believe he MIGHT have been thinking when he made those decisions.' Again, I just want the students to also be looking at their lives and the decisions they're making and what some of those outcomes could be based on those decisions. So, I want them to make a connection with the text to their OWN lives so that they can see the value, and reading isn't just about - reading about, uh, fictional characters or distant places, but about how those fictional characters and distant places actually do impact our lives and what a connection that they have to their own lives....because there's really not a right or a wrong answer. That's why I said on the - on the - the quiz here that, uh, it's what you believe he MIGHT. Because you can't get inside the character's head, you don't know." (p. 81)</p> <p>Philip</p>
Take home	2	Philip, Ashley	<p>"We don't do homework in our class. We do something called Home Connection, and I don't let the kids use the word homework....It's called Home-School Connection, and so that night I come up with one thing every day that they do.</p>

			<p>Now one thing that is assigned every night is that they have to read to someone....Someone signs it, right, and if they get three signatures on it, then they win - it's not competitive, but they get three points for their team. So, at the beginning of every day they stand up and talk about their Home Connection at the very beginning of the day when we come together and - so they have different assignments that they go home - for example, let's say I taught about the water cycle and I did a water - and I did an input chart on the water cycle and we learned about the water cycle. Their Home Connection that night might be to go home, and they have a sheet, just a blank sheet that says at the top, and it says it in English on one page and in Spanish on the other, so it's Home Connection. They need to connect with the people at home, and it's about the concept. Uh, draw and explain the water cycle using the words evaporation, condensation and precipitation. So, they have to go home and they have to draw what - and explain to someone in their family, or a neighbor, or a caregiver - what is the water cycle. And then that person signs off that they learned that, and also it says at the bottom, uh, you know, the person. " (pp. 115-117) --</p> <p>"I want them to have a conversation and build their language in whatever, you know, home language they speak and really connect school with home, and I want to see that they got it.' So, if they come back and they draw the water cycle and it doesn't look like the water cycle, and I can see it really fast, that's assessment right there. And then I can pull that child aside and say, 'You know we - 'Well, I know that I need to do it again; five kids didn't get it.' And it's also very motivational because they want to do it. " (p. 119) Ashley</p>
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Students work together on assessments	4	Philip, Tim, Lorna, and Mijael	"We have something it's called Toothpick Towers. And it's toothpicks and marshmallows and there's a challenge. And the kids are supposed to make a 12-inch kind of a free-standing structure that could hold a ping-pong ball on the top. So, things like this that, you know, bring kids together. And, you know, this involved Geometry and a little bit of kind of like, you know, architecture through the mini lesson." (p. 14) Tim
Students help create assessments	3	Mark, Lorna, and Jocelyn	"Wherever possible having the children participate in creating assessments, you know. 'What is it that we're looking for in this story? So, let's write some questions together.'" (p. 69) Lorna
Multiple choice questions	6 2 do not like 4 mention	-Phillip, Cecilia, -Tim, Mark, Jocelyn and Lorna	"back to the standard ones that come in the series, but there's two – there's always two sets of assessments. For example, Chapter 1 Math. There's the multiple choice assessment and then there's their own answer assessment. So, we utilize both because they'll have – they need to learn how to take a multiple choice test. Um, I prefer to use the other one because they have to explain to me how they got their answer, but we still have to teach them how to take the multiple-choice test, so – We do both" (pp. 32-33) Jocelyn
Retakes	2	Philip and Mijael	"I mean sometimes, um, the assessments are mandatory, um, and sometimes there's very little flexibility in the assessments that we have to give. There's certain criteria that has to be on there, but given that though, I have no problem with retakes....And so because I feel that, I will revisit with that student and say, you know, 'Tell me about this answer. Let me ask you that question again.' And without having them look at their own answer, 'Tell me – tell me what you think. Can you give me an example.' I want to give them every opportunity to be successful, so that student who didn't get much sleep I may have a conversation with them the next day. The student whose father was

			shot, which has happened recently, the father was shot and was just completely in a daze. You know what? This – your life is a little bit more important than this Math test, you know, so let’s deal with the situation another time.” (pp. 32-33) Philip
Other types of assessments are assessments that only one teacher identified using		-dioramas: Marissa -item analysis: Philip -individual whiteboards: Jocelyn - pencils: Corwin -videotape play: Mijael -open book: Jocelyn	"For instance, with the drawing and the colored pencil. What I’ve been telling them is that ‘I’m assessing you number one on whether or not you’ve put effort into your drawings and how clear your drawings are. And then number two, how well you’ve utilized the colored pencil....That’s one of the assessment points. Can you maintain a single direction when you’re applying color to an object....Is it sloppy? Are you covering your entire area? Are you leaving blank spaces? Is the movement of your colored pencils, are you leaving the bounds of your shape? And is said why is that important?...Is the color deep? And if it’s not deep, is it consistent? So, those are – these are talking points that we pulled together as a group.” (pp. 51-53) Corwin
Assessment-related Practices			
Choice	6	Marissa, Philip, Ashley, Mark, Lorna, Jocelyn,	“You, um, can study a country or a state, um, with sort of suggested direction to go - things you could include. Um, by open-ended there may be 20 things that the teacher is suggesting you could include in your project. The first five might be starred – everyone has to do the first five....but past that, then you can sort of pick and choose from the other 15. That’s open-ended. And if you don’t like any of those and you have another thing that you’d like to say about it, add it on. A lot of blanks at the end, you know. Add it on. Go for it. These are just suggested to get you started so that you don’t come up to the teacher and say, you know, ‘Mr. [name], I don’t know what to ‘ you know. So, it’s a – it’s a collaboration between the

			teacher and the student, ANOTHER thing that's not encouraged at all under No Child left Behind." (p. 47) Mark
Teachers coordinate aspects of assessment	6	Tim, Cecilia, Mark, Lorna, Corwin and Mijael	"so that gives our team about an hour and a half of planning once a week within the school day, which is - that's a blessing....And of course, we, yeah, we use that time to focus on our EPSS goals, on our curriculum map, on our assessments. You know, you would call it a sacred time. It's not a time to be running copies, 'cause that's not what it's for. It a time to meet with your team and have discussions about, you know, what we're doing." (pp. 31-32) Mijael
Rubrics	11	Marissa, Philip, Tim, Cecilia, Mark, Lorna, Jocelyn, Magdalena, Corwin and Mijael	"The purpose, yeah, the rubric what it does is, um, it just – and we go over it with the students and say this is what your – This is what a 1, a 2, a 3, a 4 is like, so they – they know what they have to do. It's not a surprise, it's not a – 'wonder what I'm getting.' ...There's very few kids that will want a 1 or a 2, and there are some that are happy with a 3, and I'm happy with that too. I think proficiency is good. I don't, you know, proficient to me means you're doing what you're supposed to." (pp. 15-16) Mijael
Intuition	5	Philip, Ashley, Magdalena, and Corwin	"a teacher after teaching for many years knows, an intuitive teacher knows if a child needs some kind of special therapy. They know. They've seen SO MANY children in front of them. They can make SO MANY comparisons to others. They know if a child needs that, and regardless of language. But unfortunately, we just don't have the assessment tools that show what we know as teachers, professionals, to prove that." (p. 34) Ashley

Domain Summary

This domain focused on teachers' reported classroom assessment practice. However, as teachers' volunteered their principles surrounding classroom assessment, practice was introduced

by philosophy. Ten teachers offered their personal philosophies on classroom assessment. In addition, eight teachers said they considered it appropriate to accommodate individual preferences, or characteristics, within their assessments and four teachers said classroom assessment served to inform their instruction.

Teachers identified classroom assessments that are: 1) scripted, which accompany packaged curricula mandated by districts; 2) formative; and 3) of various formats, which may reflect scripted, formative and non-scripted classroom assessments. Based upon their discourse, teachers appear to use a variety of assessment formats with which to assess student learning. Where required by district to use scripted curricula, generally, teachers appear mandated to use the types of classroom assessment that accompany those programs. But, teachers' reports reveal some flexibility as to the type of scripted classroom assessment that they may use: multiple choice questions, open-ended questions or problem-solving. There may be others. As described by teachers, formative assessment may portray as a scripted assessment, primarily used to check *on* student learning, while summative end of unit or end of chapter assessments may be used more to determine the extent *of* student learning.

A table illustrates primarily other aspects of classroom assessment: purposes, formats, and -related practices. As far as purpose, previously two teachers, Philip and Marissa, who teach at the same school, said they differentiate assessment for students and one teacher, Magdalena, said she differentiated assessments on her own initiative despite administrative directive otherwise. Three teachers said they give summative assessments, or assessments that measure the extent of student learning. And two teachers said they assess level of social development.

No attempt was made to account for overlap among types of assessment formats; that is, formats are not mutually exclusive. For example, one type of classroom assessment reported is

'creates own assessment.' This may demonstrate as a 'project' or as an 'open-ended format' assessment. The table simply presents what and how teachers said they assess without attempting to further delineate their offerings. Teachers said they use the following classroom assessment formats: open-ended formats, creating their own assessments, informal, observation, organizers, projects, performance, research, portfolios, journals, individual conferencing, verbal/oral presentations, use of higher order questions, take home, students working together on assessments, students helping to create class assessments, multiple choice question, retakes, and other. Other includes types of assessments, or practices, that only one teacher reported using. These include dioramas by Marissa, item analysis by Philip, use of individual whiteboards and, also, open book tests by Jocelyn, videotaping of play performances by Mijael and assessing effort and the use of pencils by Corwin.

Also denoted in the table are assessment related practices that teachers discussed. These include: giving students a choice of response format, coordinating assessments, using rubrics and using intuition.

Analysis

My purpose here is to examine participants' statements for possible reported perceptions of how they may accommodate student culture within their classroom assessments, either through their indicated philosophy or practice. In their philosophies, teachers identified the purpose of classroom assessment to be to further learning, motivate students and inform instruction. In addition, seven of the 10 teachers expressed a belief that students' individual characteristics be accommodated during assessment. I have interpreted their narratives to indicate that how they may support individual learners, and, possibly culture, in classroom assessment is through, generally, 1) how they may think about classroom assessments; 2) use of

selected assessment formats; 3) feedback; 4) self-assessment; 5) interpretation of assessment results; and 6) assessment retakes.

How Teachers may Think about Classroom Assessments

Teachers at times expressed the sentiment that they wanted their assessments to be available to all students. Mark stated that making assessments "accessible" in different ways to students was "just part and parcel of what you do" (p. 67) as a teacher. Realizing the need to render assessments variably accessible equates to recognizing individual differences. Meanwhile Corwin indicated that he "constantly" evaluated students' progress individually by observing them and their art (pp. 43-45). And Cecilia said that she "makes" assessments "based on" her students, (p. 54) or does "little types of things that's more like personalized," (p. 59). To make assessments according to her students is, again, to recognize student differences, or individuality, as is "more personalized." Philip and Marissa both said that they differentiated assessment. Magdalena, when pressed, admitted she did as well, but for herself and not on behalf of the school which, she said, wanted all assessments to be the same. Plus, three teachers, Tim, Mijael and Ashley, said they met with students individually to assess their reading progress. Although this form of assessment may be a requirement, generally teachers appear aware of student differences and willing, if not committed, to allow for them in their assessments even if, at times, how they would make them "accessible" or "base" them sounds vague. Teachers' emphasis on students' individual differences and intent to allow for them within their classroom assessments suggests a strong desire that students needs and/or circumstances or background be supported in their assessments. While not mentioned specifically, students' individual needs may well include culture. Culture itself – as defined by the teachers generally - incorporates a broad array of features, including background, interests, language, values and parental background.

Individuality could also include aspects external to culture, such as, development and learning needs. Further study is needed to reveal what teachers do include in their concept of student individuality.

Assessment Format

It may be helpful to review types of assessment formats in discussing teachers' assessment practices. Assessment questions, or items, can be typified into two main categories: those for which the student generates a response, often referred to as supply-response, produce-response or constructed-response items; and those for which the student selects an already constructed response, or select-response items (Thorndike, 2004). Both types of questions can be used to assess higher- and lower- order thinking. Examining teachers' narratives on classroom assessment discloses that they appear to often refer to employing supply-response questions. An example of a supply-response question would be an essay question, such as Mark's (p. 52), "Tell me what you remember about the structure of an atom." That Mark intended the question to allow for individual expression is seen from his statement that the "open-ended nature" (pp. 52-53) of the question was important in order that the child of professional parents and that of parents without material resources could respond to the same question. An example of a select-response item would be a multiple choice question with three or four different options from which to select. No teacher offered an example of a select-response item, although Jocelyn did say previously that she taught her students how to take multiple choice tests.

Despite what appear to be district mandates for schools and teachers to abide by scripted curricula and tests, participants often described using assessments that permitted students varying degrees of choice in either content or format in responding to an assessment question, or task. Performance assessments are defined as assessments that require the student to "carry out a

complex, extended process ... or produce an important product," (Nitko, p. 522). An example would be Philip's (pp. 17-19) assessment item, "What do you know about potential energy and how it works?" Here students could select from different modalities to demonstrate and communicate their knowledge. Their product would be their demonstration, whether a paper, a physical project or other means, that illustrated their grasp of the concept. Cecilia's request for students to research an animal is another example of a performance assessment, although she referred to it as 'research.' Students had to read about the animal in a book they checked out from the library, learn its habitat and various types of adaptations and then, apply the standards to their knowledge, and present all in a power point, the product. Although teachers termed some of their assessments as research or projects, based upon Nitko's definition of performance assessments, they fit within the category of performance assessment. Upon reviewing teachers' statements on their assessments, it appears that they all, with the possible exception of Jocelyn, administer performance assessments.

Context-dependent sets are another form of assessment (Nitko, 2000). "This item format is especially suited for assessing higher-order thinking, problem solving, and critical thinking," (Nitko, 2004, p. 200). Typically, based upon introductory material, the student is required to answer one or more questions, solve problems or complete tasks (Nitko, 2004). Tim represented that his students may use this type of format because they had to solve word math problems. He said he would prefer to allow students to select the strategy of their choice to solve a problem. Also indicating use of this type of assessment was Philip with his story of *Weijo and Grandfather Rock*, wherein students were asked to apply critical thinking to the boy's choices in the story and then connect those to their own lives. Because students have different ways of

thinking and learning, Philip said he gives them a choice of representing and communicating what they know.

Based on their statements, these teachers appear to want to allow for individual expression and differences by providing students with an assessment format that offers some level of choice in student responses, or mode of response, to assessment questions, or tasks. Participants appear to favor supply-response items and/or performance assessments. Plus, they seem determined in their efforts to attend to student individuality by creating such opportunities. Their determination to honor their students' needs within their classroom assessment formats is particularly noteworthy since eight said they were required to abide by the scripted curricula and tests. That these teachers on their own initiative go to lengths to provide for individuation on assessment attests to their support of their students and their learning.

Assessment Results

I interpret teachers' comments on assessment results to attend to the individual when the teacher either relates the results to the individual or says that results are individual. Corwin recognized individual assessment results when he exclaimed that progress for the boy who had created two planes was "huge!" (pp. 14-15). And Mark identified assessment results for the individual in terms of improvement, or "gains."

But the more informal assessments that we do, um, in the classroom, um, a teacher is able to take, um, to take, uh, individual, um, circumstances into account. And what you want to look for are gains; gains from point A to subsequent points B, C, D that are in the future. (p. 51)

Lorna stipulated that assessment is individual because "many times, um, individual children for different reasons are on different paths with different constraints, different difficulties, different motivations. And so then assessment becomes individual because you get individual results," (p. 31). Teachers' statements on results illustrate that they hold a conception of the individual and

the meaning those results hold for a particular student. This view stands in contrast to one that would inform instruction, wherein the teacher would review the results to determine whether the class understood the content and whether she needed to teach further. Therefore, three teachers seem to perceive assessment results on a student-by-student basis.

Feedback

Of the teachers who said they gave written feedback, they appear to share a common approach, based upon their statements. Mijael, who said he gave individual feedback, also characterized his written feedback as individual when he said that he wrote comments on each student's paper including "something positive" as well as something he had "noticed," (p. 23). That which he "noticed" was an item for student improvement. He added that students liked not being "singled out," (p. 23). Jocelyn, Mark and Corwin portrayed their feedback as similar to Mijael's - a positive observation combined with an area for improvement. Magdalena indicated her feedback was verbal because she met with students "each, one on one," (p. 17) as well as written and individual. Cecilia also said she gave students individual notes. In addition to saying that he also gave verbal feedback, Mark asserted that feedback was "determined by" both students' personality and personal relationships between the teacher and students (pp. 69-70). Often those who ask for feedback are those who least need it, he said, reminiscent of DeLuque and Sommer (2000) who arrived at similar findings for those within an individualistic or independent culture. Thus, based upon statements, six teachers' statements represent them as giving students individual feedback.

Questioning

Although different teachers, such as Mijael, Ashley and Philip related that they taught students to question, Cecilia said she questioned students on an individual basis. Mark also said

that he would question a student to "lead the student along, you know, um, to greater depth of understanding," (pp. 83-84). Philip did not say explicitly that he questioned students individually, but he stated that he asked open-ended questions in class to "lead toward conversation and discussion", (p. 61) suggesting that he does so to elicit student thinking and understanding of a subject one-on-one. Based upon their statements, three teachers appear to purposefully question students individually.

Self-assessment

Tim, Jocelyn, Philip, Mijael and Cecilia reported that they have their students self-assess. Tim said his students keep portfolios with individual growth plans that they themselves create. Jocelyn noted that her students self assess in writing. Philip, Mijael and Cecilia all said their students self-reflect. That students self assess or self reflect is an individual assessment practice that encourages autonomy.

Re-takes

As with questioning, only two teachers said they allow individual students to re-test: Mijael and Philip. Philip said based upon his knowledge of the student, even though some assessments were mandatory and could not be changed, he would evaluate whether he thought that student actually knew more than how he performed on the test. If so, he would "revisit" with the student and ask him questions (pp. 32-33). Philip's statement indicates he retests on an individual basis.

Summary

In sum, teachers appear to, one, be aware of individual differences and, two, attempt to allow for them within their assessment practices - namely, assessment formats and results, feedback, self-assessment and re-giving an assessment. All 11 teachers said they used at least

one of these assessment practices. These avenues appear to provide students' some degree of choice in their representation of knowledge and/or skills. One may argue as to whether allowing for different ways of responding to an assessment constitutes true student choice. Plus, although students are given some choice in responding, that choice seems more often limited to a singular representation, or assessment, rather than different assessments for different individuals. As David said, "I wouldn't give different assessments to different kids on the same material," (p. 52). Whether one agrees with whether these practices constitute individual choice or reflect individuality, nevertheless, teachers think they do - based upon their statements. As such, they appear dedicated to offering students the opportunity to respond on that basis - ways that teachers conceive of as more meaningful to them. Therefore, it seems that teachers attempt to accommodate the student with differences in their classroom assessments. Given teachers' pressured environment of scripted curricula and increased mandated testing, that teachers would even voluntarily administer open-ended items and performance assessments seems a stretch in itself. This is particularly so when teachers assert that the classroom instruction time they do have is significantly curtailed due to mandated blocks for teaching standards-tested subjects along with administrative directives, either implied or overt, to prepare students for the tests. That teachers would voluntarily opt to administer classroom assessments under these attested conditions suggests a teacher cadre highly dedicated to their students. This perception is reinforced in light of their earlier stated teaching philosophies that included student-centered teacher attributes of caring, respect, expectations and concern for creating a safe and successful learning environment.

Although this analysis is concerned with how teachers operationalize student individuality, and possibly culture, in assessments, a few additional observations on their

reported classroom assessment practices are offered. First, it appears whether they teach within a school environment that permits or encourages differentiated assessment, such as Philip's and Marissa's may, most teachers' statements claim that they operate within one that stipulates fidelity to a scripted program. Given participants' statements about individualizing assessments for their students, assessment fidelity appears to be questionable, if not violated - as in Magdalena's case. She placed her conception of what students needed above that of the school administrations and did, she said, differentiate assessment. She did so based upon what she thought her students needed. Thus, she was considering their individual needs. As with the other teachers who - perhaps with more leeway - choose to design individually-oriented classroom assessments, it is students' perceived needs to which participants appear to hold allegiance. Second, it appears that in at least Cecilia's case, the apparent quickness with which a school district may bestow a new scripted program on teachers may have score consequences. Cecilia noted that because she did not understand that the formative assessment was not to be graded and considered part of students' record, she did and students did not score very well. Those scores were reflected in their records. And Jocelyn said she wanted help in learning how to ask students questions. Plus, Mark said he wanted to learn how to have students self-assess. The implication from their statements is that teachers need additional assessment training. This implication corresponds with Stiggins' (2005b) statement that we in the measurement community need to do more to help teachers. Third, formative assessment appears to be considered across districts as an interim assessment step that identifies the level of students' current understanding and is even used as a practice document. That it may be an instrument that students would attempt again and again differs with my understanding of formative assessment per Black and Wiliam (1998, 2003) - a systematic means of identifying successive learning targets for continued improvement. But,

it does appear to be used to further student learning. And fourth, two teachers, Ashley and Marissa, said they use students' presentations of their classroom assessment assignments as a device to teach other students about that particular topic. Fifth, why some teachers did not choose to refer to peer collaboration/writing or peer review/grading as peer assessment is not clear. By choosing to omit the term assessment, the possibility is suggested that as a term assessment may be objectionable to teachers. Ashley's reason for not calling an assessment an assessment seemed clear: students had a negative reaction to it. It seems some teachers may as well. Finally, several teachers including Mark, Ashley, Tim, Jocelyn, Magdalena, Corwin and Lorna seem to blame the NCLB legislation for their scripted curricula and perceived testing dilemmas. This legislation is not responsible for their classroom difficulties. It is administrative personnel at the state, district and school level who make the curricula- and assessment-related decisions that affect schoolroom teachers. To conclude, district-mandated scripted curricula may be having implementation difficulties because of a lack of adequate teacher training and observance of fidelity. Two, teachers appear to shape classroom assessments into different venues with or without administrative latitude based upon what they consider to be in students' best interests, individual included. Teachers' directed focus on student individuality suggests a similarly high level of regard for their students' perceived needs and a commitment to address them as best they can.

Chapter 8

Culture

Results

Well, I have, uh, I have a student who is VERY VERY distractive. Very ... he was sitting at a little desk – I have tables in my classroom, but I do have one little desk....And he would tell me, ‘Miss [name], it just helps me. I need it.’ Like he knew. They’re fourth graders so they know....It was like poster board and it was kind of like cut in half and, and....it was like his little like office....And he needed it like a certain color....He was like, ‘I want my orange....So little things like that.... It’s just like right here, like their own little [desk]....there’s times ... other assessments that I would just forget ... and he would remind me. ‘Remember, I need it.’.....Cecilia (pp. 43-45)

This chapter examines the role of culture within the instructional and assessment milieu of the classroom. It has two parts. Part one spotlights teachers and their culture. It begins with teachers' definitions of culture. It also delivers excerpts from their discourse on how they perceived culture to permeate their own lives and on culturally-laded biographical aspects they attributed to directly impacting their instructional and assessment practices. Part two focuses on students: their individual needs and culture. It begins with teachers' definitions of culture pertaining to students. It, then, presents teachers' perceptions of how they perceived that they accommodated students' individual needs and culture.

Part One: Teachers and Their Culture

Definitions.

As a prelude to discussing culture and the classroom, I asked teachers to define culture. Although the emphasis varied, the majority of teachers, seven, defined culture largely in terms of traditions, values, language, ethnicity and food, etc. For example, Corwin stressed the importance of traditions, while Tim stressed values. The other five teachers who expressed a traditional view of culture are Marissa, Cecilia, Mark, Jocelyn, and Magdalena. Two teachers,

Ashley and Mijael, conceived of culture primarily as ways of behaving. Ashley also highlighted the role of resources within culture. And Philip and Lorna said they perceived of culture as more of an individual matter.

Traditions, values, language, ethnicity and food, etc.

Reflecting the majority depiction of culture, Marissa said,

Culture is – culture is, (pause) your language, uh, what you do, traditions, food, the way you dress, um, outwardly, I guess. Things on the outside, um, are usually the first things people – people mention with culture, but it's also – (spoken more quietly) Inside it's who and what you associate with, um, where you feel comfortable. (p. 41)

Accentuating the importance of values and norms, as well as traditions, Tim said,

I mean I see language and culture as being, you know, very intricately or intimately connected, um. But, within that, you now, I see culture as a set of, you know, norms and values and traditions that – that – that unite people and – and – and sort of, you know, are the common ties amongst a group of people. Um, yeah, I think in the simplest terms that's – that's – that's what I see culture as. (p. 32)

Ways of behaving.

Reflecting the view that culture determines as well as demonstrates in behavior was Ashley.

I think culture is what determines how we behave and how we perceive the world, and, um, I think culture is influenced by where we grew up, the people around us mostly. I think that's really important, the people that we spend the most time with and has a lot to do with our values and morals, and a lot of those come from the people that we spend the most time with. I think culture is how we see the world, from what perspective we see the world, and it's very complex. (end p. 91)

Mijael agreed that culture is demonstrated in behavior.

The individual.

Philip and Lorna conceived of culture as pertaining to the individual. Philip said,

And if that's a similar value system, then, yeah, you know, that begins to define a culture, but remaining cognizant that the minute that you begin to stereotype them though based on those outward appearances, those outward behaviors, that you're really limiting the individuals within the culture itself. So, yeah, I mean, you can

define culture by the music that's being listened to, by their religion, um, the language, the accents, the foods that they eat, etc. and so forth, you know. And those are the, I think, what would be considered the generalized ways to define culture. But I really, truly believe that culture is within the individual and the immediate group of people with whom they associate and those shared values and ideas, um, and their outlook on life and the way they communicate with people. Those things to me are more – more telling I guess. I don't know how else to describe it. It's such a – an abstract concept to really, you know, grab a hold on but I think that, um, defining culture by, uh, generalized behaviors and attitudes is kinda dangerous. (p. 44)

Summary: definitions.

The following table illustrates how teachers defined culture - primarily in three ways: as 1) reflecting a group's traditions, foods, language and values (7); 2) ways of behaving (2); and 3) as residing in the individual (2).

Table 9. Definitions of Culture

Definition	Number of Teachers	Names of Teachers
Traditions, values, language, ethnicity and food	7	Tim, Marissa, Cecilia, Mark, Jocelyn, Magdalena and Corwin
Ways of behaving	2	Ashley and Mijael
The individual, self-define	2	Philip and Lorna

Teachers ' cultural experiences.

During conversations, teachers often lapsed into reflecting upon their own culture and backgrounds. I regard these digressions as illuminating their conceptions of culture and have included them as part of their cultural orientations. This section includes, first, a few personal vignettes that teachers volunteered, followed by excerpts on how some teachers perceived their own cultural biography to inform their pedagogy.

Personal vignettes.

Philip, who defined culture in terms of the individual, reflected on his childhood and how it affected his outlook on culture.

I think culture is in the individual. Um, for me, again, you know, I was born in Brazil. And I went to live in Wyoming for most of my life, and moved – then I moved down to [name of state] and I lost a lot of my identity. Even though I'm surrounded by Latinos and Hispanics, I lost a lot of my identity. Because I became so, what I would say, acculturated in so many ways when I was living in Wyoming to the traditions, um, I mean, come on, the Easter Bunny, you know. In Brazil that – there's no such thing as the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus, those – you know. All of a sudden, those things became part of my life as a Latino in the West or Midwest. And then, when I come here and am exposed to a greater population of Latinos and Hispanics and, um, and then the different things that, uh, that they bring - And I'm like, 'Wait a minute.' You begin to question who you are. And you start to realize that you know what, culture, for me, and this is, you know, obviously my opinion this is, culture really is in the – in the individual and how they share their values, their belief system with those around them. (pp.43-44)

Magdalena, from Argentina, described how she applied her own heritage to teach students about cultural differences among Hispanics.

For example, I tell them I never eat before tacos or tamales. Is my first time, or chili. I never, ever eat that before, and so they say, 'Oh, really!' 'Yeah, I didn't know the difference of tortilla, flour tortilla or corn tortilla because we don't have that.' So, I explain to them what's that because – so it's kind of different for her – them, and I brought my own food, you know, the kind of food I eat. So they say, 'Okay, even though we are Hispanics, but still we have difference.' (p. 39)

And Mijael, from Mexico, divulged how he is "drawn to" students with similar backgrounds as himself.

Like I'm, you know, from a Mexican background, so I – immediately, I – right away, I seek out the ones who have, you know, my lived experience, my same – and I kinda tend to, you know, just – I kinda – I know how they learn. I know how I learn so – but then you have to take into account, you know, so what? You know, what about the, you know, what about the other cultural groups? You have to give them that same consideration. But I mean, I think as humans we're naturally drawn to our own, you know, who share a similar cultural background, and I think that's where the tricky thing is. As a teacher you have to give the other cultural backgrounds the same importance as you. And by that I mean, not just doing things around, you know, just Chicano, but you have to understand, which is, you know, and just, you know, acknowledge all the cultures, and do it in an authentic manner. Not just a superficial, not just a – oh, a holiday, you know, but more like deep thinking. (pp. 13-14)

Biography informs instruction.

Like Philip, Magdalena and Mijael, who acknowledged that their backgrounds played a role in their pedagogy, other teachers cited circumstances that they said directly influenced their classroom teaching. These circumstances include: 1) childhood school experiences, 2) personal factors, and 3) academic training.

School experiences.

Four teachers volunteered school experiences from childhood that they said resulted in their adopting particular classroom procedures and practices. Within the teacher's narrative below, often the childhood experience is presented prior to the teaching effect but not always. Because teachers' recounted experiences and effects do not follow the same order across vignettes, that is, sometimes in the story, the experience precedes and explains the effect, but sometimes the teacher describes the effect before relating the experience that, in her view, precipitated the effect. To help the reader identify whether the text that immediately follows is experience or effect, I named it as such and placed it within brackets. The brackets are intended to unobtrusively facilitate coherence and flow.

Philip associated his value for student input and the collaborative process with a 'power' difference that he experienced in school.

[Effect] It's a matter for me and it's something that our school really values is the student's input.

[The experience] Um, you know, I reflect on this with my own learning in elementary school, and I remember VERY forcefully the teacher standing up there. And that teacher had ALL the power and any questions, any comments or concerns were just not accepted.

[The effect] And, um, and for me learning is a collaborative process. (pp. 7 – 8)

Again, he vividly recalled an experience from childhood.

[The experience] Um, I'm an immigrant. I came to the U.S. when I was seven years old. I went to – my family put me in Wyoming, um, and we were the only Latino family in the whole community of 10,000 people, um ... it was difficult growing up, and, um, I remember. And, you know, again, I teach based on a lot of my experiences as I was growing up. But, I remember, um, being expected to act in a certain way, being expected to think in a certain way, and I – that's not how I thought. That's not – those weren't my traditions, you know. That wasn't my language, um. And so, I clearly remember those difficulties, and I clearly remember being ridiculed for being different. And I clearly remember, uh, taking the IQ test in English and being told that I was in Special Ed because I didn't understand anything and I'd only been in the United States – you know, for two weeks. And, um, and just, uh, the lack of empathy and the lack of accommodations to – to ME as an individual, and being expected to sink or swim is really kind of the attitude that I got.

[The effect] And I just refuse! refuse! to have that mentality with my students. Because as I tell the kids ... 'How many of you are really good at Math?... You got some people here who think they're okay, and some people who don't know a whole lot. What does that tell us? That we're all different like.' ... So, what I'm trying to show them is that if we share what we know with each other, that if you're a good writer and I'm a lousy writer, but I'm a good reader and you're not such a good reader, then if we work together and we share the knowledge, we both get better, you know. So, it's not one person is the smartest person in the classroom. It's like we're ALL as smart and we're ALL as good as long as we work together with our strengths and accept that we have challenges. So, there's no shame in asking for help. That's the whole point, and there's absolutely a celebration when you are able to collaborate with somebody who doesn't know as much as you do, knowing that they may return the favor to you in a different way. (pp. 38-40)

Marissa was, similarly, mindful of her own personal history and its impact on her teaching.

[The experience] Ahm - well I guess I should say I'm a Mexican immigrant, (laughs) and ah

[The effect] I believe that, um, through education, students can learn how to improve their lot in life. And that I should not only inspire them to do that but teach them how to get there. (p. 14)

Cecilia recollected two events that influenced her, also involving teachers. One was a teacher who she characterized as not revealing much about herself; in contrast, she said, she, herself, 'bubbles' over.

[The experience] and you know, [she recalls telling her students], I remember when I was young, this and that, you know. Then, they understand you a little bit more, a little more. I just remember being like fourth grade and my teacher was just so, um, my fourth grade teacher was just so – um, just so plain and so – just – She would teach out of the textbook and that was that, and we sat in rows. It was so boring! I didn't know anything about her. I didn't know anything about her.

[The effect] And I'm just not like that as a person. I'm just real bubbly and everybody knows ALL about me and I – I mean, it's fine and there's times I've told the kids, 'Well, I remember I did this when I was in high school and my mother – ' And they wanted to hear it so much – like when their teacher got in trouble. And I – I mean I remember like it was yesterday, um, and then there's times, well, and – it's just so – and always I just to connect to them (pp. 64-65)

She noted another teacher who did not check on student learning before an assessment.

[The experience] Sometimes I remember being back in school or where my teacher would teach and teach and teach and teach, never stopped, quit and asking how – what we know so far and then give us a big test. And that was the test, and things have changed.

[The effect] I know that I have to stop and review and make sure and maybe give just a quick - just a page with two questions, quick. Something quick just to see where they're at so far (p. 20)

Mijael recalled a similar childhood experience regarding a teacher's grading procedure.

[The effect] and then most of the time, I – when kids are, you know, I tend not to – I don't want to get up – be up there and lecturing all the time. When they're doing something, I always kinda check on them where, you know, I've –

[The experience] I remember my teachers when we would do the stuff independently, they would always sit at their desk and grade or something,

[The effect] and to me, I feel like – I, you know, like it's a disservice to my students. This is just MY opinion, to my students that I could be that time – I could always come a little bit in the morning or use this afternoon to grade, but that's a time that I can go walk around and say, 'Hey, how's it going? Are you understanding this?' That kind of stuff, 'Just checking in.' Sometimes, they'll say, 'Yeah' or 'I don't understand this.' Or you know, 'Everything okay?' um, stuff like that. (pp. 48-49)

He also remembered being forced to present.

[The effect] But I don't –if there's something – I don't force students to be up there

[The experience] 'cause I didn't like it when they forced me to go up there as a student, you know

[The effect] What I also do is I walk around, and if I know that a student did it correctly or did it in a different way, you know, I kind of encourage them and say, 'Wow, that's a really neat way. I would never have thought of that. You should consider, you know, showing the rest of the class.' ...but I kinda kindly nudge and say, 'Come on, come on. You have to, you have to – it's like – that's cool 'cause no one else did it like that. Go up there and I'll be with you and I'll – if you get stuck, I'll – .' So, you know, sometimes it works; sometimes they're like, 'No, I don't – really don't want to go.' But I say, 'Well, can I mention your name?' I say, 'Hey, you know, Leslie' – just a name – 'Oh, you know, Leslie also had a different way that was cool, you know.' And so, and so, it gives them praise. They're kinda like, 'Yeah, I got it, but I don't have to go up there and explain it.' (pp. 50-51)

Moreover, he recollected also being impacted by content he did not receive in school that he thinks he should have.

[The experience] And we went with, um, the Greek myths because again, I think for me, I didn't learn about that [Greek myths] until I was in college, (p. 19)

[The effect] and I think exposure is good too. You need to expose students to that, so we did our unit on myths from around the world, and then we knew that every culture has a myth, has myths and legends. And then, we said, 'Okay, you know, uh, what do we want our myths – what do we want our play to have?' 'We want dragons, or we want this, or we want that.' And I said, 'Well it seems to – .' And I said, 'What about these, you know, they have all the elements – the magic, the gods and this?' And they liked the Greek ones. They were like, 'Oh, that's cool, you know. We can do this. I like the guy that has the bowl too – whatever – you know, Zeus.' (pp.19-20)

And Marissa had a memorable science fair project.

[The effect] And so I think – I make it a point with certain things, like the Science Fair, some teachers say, 'Here's your board. Go do a science project at home.' Well, I know some of my kids don't have the support that others do. While some have parents that are doctors, others don't, and so I don't give it to them. I make them do it here, and then I make them all have – we bring in the Computer on Wheels – it's the COW – and we, um, I let all of them use the computer. Um, to make their graphs and make their, you know, come up with their data and stuff, because not all of them have computer and Internet access at home. I have to make that possible for them here.

[The experience] Yeah, uh – hmm, I remember turning in a crappy Science Fair project. I didn't like it, so I don't like my – I don't want my kids to go through certain things. (pp. 15-16)

Personal factors.

Personal factors refer to teacher attributes or situations. Philip, Ashley and Lorna recounted personal factors that they considered to have impacted their teaching. As with the teachers' stories of their experiences, specified factors and effects are indicated in brackets with the order dependent upon teachers' narratives. Philip acknowledged that his personal learning style impacted his teaching approach.

[The effect] I try very hard to make it [learning math and fractions] meaningful and try to reach the students in all the different, uh, ways that they learn the different modalities, um,

[The personal factor] because I'm a hands-on learner. And I'm a visual learner,

[The effect] and I see myself teaching in the way that I learn best, and so standing up there talking just isn't my thing, um. So, I really try to bring in, uh, situations that are meaningful to them. We'll do a lot of cooking because recipes are beautiful for fractions and adding and multiplying fractions and things like that, so we'll do a lot of cooking. Um, we'll do, uh, we'll do some projects where there's a lot of measurement going on, but they don't really understand that that's what they're doing, you know. It's hands on, it's self exploration, um. (pp. 11-12)

Ashley who has recently returned to teaching after her two children reached school age, believes that being a mother has contributed to her teaching.

[The personal factor] and you know, as a mother now, I'm a much better teacher now that I'm a mother. And I'm sure that's not true of all teachers that aren't mothers. But for myself, I'm that way. (p. 29)

[The effect] because I listened to my administrators and my professors and all this before and I thought, 'Oh, I've got to teach them, you know, all these facts. They've got to know the dates of all these things and they have to – their multiplication tables and they have to know all these things.' And then I realized that, you know, there's so much to learn in the world. What good is it to teach them a bunch of facts? What we've got to really do for kids is teach them, uh, how to – to believe in themselves and to get excited about learning so that they'll

go out and learn those things that they really need to learn based on their own strengths and abilities. (pp. 29-30)

Meanwhile Lorna reflected briefly upon an illness within her family that, she said, contributed to her current views as to what constituted acceptable student learning.

[The personal factor] Some children are going through certain experiences at home, or some children, um, are on a certain developmental path, or some children become very ill, like I had my child, um, become. (p. 63)

[The effect] And what they have to take from a certain time period in their life, we can say a school year, is not for anybody to dictate, and there are some times we just have to give ourselves over to that and it just is what it is. And so, um, there's a reality there, too, that kind of – it's not true for most children, most children can meet standards, but every once in a while, you get one or two here and there for whom the norm is not what is appropriate for them. (p. 63)

Academic training.

Marissa, Mark and Tim acknowledged their formal education with influencing particular classroom practices. Marissa recalled purposefully discussing her own educational process with her students.

[The academic feature] I got a scholarship to get my Master's. I let them know when I got accepted....For me, it was – I decided to go ahead and get my Ph.D. eventually when I met [name of person] and I was just in awe, you know. The sky opened and I was like, 'Oh my gosh! I want to be just like her.' (p. 24)

[The effect] And so I want to let my kids know that this is possible, um, for I guess the same reason, um, to be a motivator, um.' (p. 24)

Mark credited, at least partially, the content area of his academic major in affecting his outlook on student differences in ethnicity.

[The effect] It's [New Mexico Hispanic versus immigrant Hispanic] VERY different. It's night and day! Just like when I lived in Africa. People here think that just because you're Black and you're from Africa you share all these characteristics, and now with DNA testing we know that couldn't be farther from the truth. Someone in, uh, Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa where I was and someone in Kenya on the other side of Africa, they've both Black, and to you and me, they would look just, you know, just Black Africans. We wouldn't think anything of it.

They are farther apart, um, sometimes culturally, but, certainly, genetically than I would be to any one of those two. I'm MORE closely related to those two people than they are to themselves. But just because of this surface, you know, and it's the same thing with New Mexico Hispanics and then recent immigrants – same thing....But, it's definitely the case, and you know, the stereotypical thing is the, um, the tension between New Mexico Hispanics and recent immigrants, and 'Don't you dare call me a Mexican,' and that sort of thing. (p.10)

[The academic feature] Um, my degree is in Anthropology originally, so that's another reason, I mean in education, that I, you know, I wear that hat a lot when I'm analyzing that. (p. 10)

Similarly, Tim acknowledged a university course with influencing a perspective he said he gained as a result.

[The academic feature] I took a course just not too long ago. It was Action Practitioner Research.

[The effect] And so I was doing some, you know, some qualitative research in my own classroom, and, so, you know, one of the things I found was that, you know, for example, you know, I had like four or five boys who spoke, you know, five times as much as anyone else in the classroom. So, you know, classroom conversations can definitely be dominated by boys. Um, there's sometimes kids who don't speak, you know. (p. 9)

Summary: teachers and their culture.

Three teachers related personal experiences that reveal that they held a distinct awareness of culture, they were all born outside the United States. Eight teachers cited 13 school experiences, personal factors or academic features with affecting either how they taught or what they taught. Of these, four teachers credited seven school experiences, three teachers mentioned three personal factors and three teachers identified academic features from their backgrounds that they consider to play a role in their pedagogy. The types of experiences that teachers described as affecting their classroom practices are summarized in the following table.

Table 10. Biography Informs Instruction

Individual Circumstances	Number of Teachers	Names of Teachers
School Experiences	4	Philip, Marissa, Cecilia and Mijael
Personal Factors	3	Philip, Ashley and Lorna
Academic Training	3	Marissa, Mark and Tim

Part Two: Teachers and Student Culture

Through teachers' own definitions and volunteered personal experiences, Part 1 established that teachers held an awareness of culture. Part 2 examines teachers reported beliefs, perceptions, and practices surrounding the role of culture in the classroom: both in terms of the individual student's needs and in terms of culture, generally. First, student culture is defined by the teachers -- as only what they perceive as culture can be relevant. Secondly, how they said that they situated and provided for the role of culture and/or the individual student in their classroom is presented in their reported classroom assessment practices.

Definition of student culture.

Two themes predominated in teachers' student culture definitions: participation of students in their families' culture and ethnicity. Teachers sometimes espoused both views. Defining student culture in terms of ethnicity were: Marissa, Philip, and Tim. Perceiving student culture in terms of students being "extensions" of their families' culture were Tim, Cecilia, Lorna, Corwin and Mijael. Conceiving of student culture as within the individual were Jocelyn and Magdalena. And Ashley envisioned student culture based on resources, while Mark perceived it in terms of how students relate to education.

Ethnicity.

Marissa focused on ethnicity in terms of with which country or ethnicity group students "are comfortable" identifying. Although she also reflected an individual perspective, because so

much of her discourse centered on ethnicity, I situated her response within the ethnicity grouping.

It [student culture] changes with each student, I guess, because the – where – where they feel comfortable with whom they are is different for each one of them. I have, um, a student that's from Ecuador, and when I was going through the test, you know, it labels kids as Hispanic, or Latino, and White, Native American, and he's indigenous from Ecuador. He's Quichua. And so, I was going through and, you know, making sure that the kids agreed with their label, um, and his was Hispanic. And he immediately said, 'I'm not Hispanic.' And I said, 'I know, ah, but I – we can't write down Native American', um, because he's also not Native American. Um, we couldn't put down White, because he's not. So, it depends. I mean, for the most part, the kids were okay with, you know, Latino, Hispanic, um, but with him, I just had to say, 'Yeah, we have to fill in a bubble. Which one do you want to fill in? (laughs).' So, it depends, because I know – I know that he's comfortable, um, here. Because he's just pretty free to be himself, um, but it depends – it depends. I can tell that he's not comfortable with certain other kids, um, and so – yeah, my student culture I guess it would be where they're – where they find themselves at ease. (pp. 41-42)

Philip, on the other hand, said to define culture, he, first, had to distinguish between Hispanic and Mexican immigrant students and the culture clash that he viewed as coloring the school environment. Since he deemed it necessary to contrast these two groups with their attendant differing values and beliefs based on ethnicity, I placed his response within ethnicity.

It's interesting for me, uh, being able this year to teach, uh, the five different classes, because in years past I've always taught what's called at this school, the traditional strand, which is English only. Okay, and so – so to describe student culture I can barely do that in comparison to the other strand, which is our dual-language strand. The students who have been in the 90/10: 90 percent Spanish, 10 percent English, that's augmented every year until it's 50/50 at the fifth grade. And so I've been teaching in the English-only strand for a number of years now. And this year, I finally got a chance, an opportunity to teach ALL the students, both in the traditional strand and those in the dual-language strand, and there really is a VERY different attitude towards learning. Um, and that to me was really just kind of eye opening, because - you kind of expect that students at this age level, you know, and developmentally they should all be more or less about the same, more or less, um, but ATTITUDES though, you know their attitudes towards, um...How do I describe it? It's really interesting, um - But attitudes towards learning, attitudes towards authority, attitudes towards one another, their peer group, um, attitudes towards the - the general public, and just attitudes toward the class next door - So vastly different! Um, we've actually had many altercations between the traditional-strand students and the dual-language-strand students, because the dual-language students are the MEXICAN students. The

traditional-strand students are the AMERICAN students, EVEN THOUGH – this is where I just like - it just - you laugh because otherwise you cry - even though a lot of my kids in the traditional strand have - you know, are first generation, or have had - are just like second generation living in New Mexico, um. But they're SO wanting to remove themselves from their roots and embrace, you know, mainstream American culture – um. And again that's dangerous to phrase it that way - but they're - that they don't WANT to speak Spanish. They don't WANT to eat the same foods that the parents bring in. Um, they don't WANT to speak with an accent, um, and this – These are the things because I've told them – I've asked my students point blank, 'You know, what exactly is the deal?' 'Well, they speak Spanish.' I'm like, 'Okay, and?' 'And they talk funny.' Okay, so you know, you start getting these things out of them. But there's like a sense of – it's almost like a sense of resentment that I get from the students and that's really kind of trying to – to understand. But then again, as we talked earlier about how their rearing impacts their learning. And then you have conversations with their families, and the same attitudes exist there. So, those things are being - those things exist there. So, it's not something that the kids are picking up from each other, which they ARE to some extent, but it's also being reinforced in the home, um, and that's difficult to deal with. That's really difficult to deal with, because you want to engage the parents in a collaborative effort to - for, you know, to better their students. But when those attitudes towards other social groups and racial groups are so negative, um, that's really difficult to address, because - and then it becomes an issue of values. Is it MY values or is it YOUR values, and whose values are more important? And should my values even BE an issue at this point in time? And so, that becomes really kind of difficult to address here. So, you know, it's a - it's a really fine line. It's a really fine line to walk as to talking to the kids about stereotypes, and which I do because it is part of the curriculum, thank goodness, and I do talk to (pp. 45-48)

Although Tim said he viewed students' culture as "extensions" of their parents' culture (p. 36) and that students bring to school their families' culture, he also recognized the Mexican and Hispanic cultures.

There's a predominant culture in our classroom. But I mean, you know, the majority of our kids are – are – are – are of a Mexican cultural, you know, tradition. Um, you know, I have a handful of kids who are – who are from a New Mexican, you know, Hispanic tradition, which is very different, um (p. 32)

Part of family culture.

Lorna's quote below is representative of student culture definitions by Cecilia, Corwin and Mijael on family background, as well as Tim's reference above.

Their culture is what THEY and their family describe as being a collection of different characteristics including – Some of which include, um, their language, their ideology, um, their customs, their traditions, uh, celebrations, the food they eat, the music they listen to, um, their ways of being in every which way you could possibly conceptualize that term, whatever their ways of being are. However, they name themselves, um, their outlook, their perspective. (p. 89)

The individual.

Jocelyn and Magdalena, as well as Philip earlier in his definition of culture, conceived of student culture in terms of the individual. Jocelyn said,

They create their own within and of themselves, because even though your family has these values, you might have a different opinion of them, even though -. I mean I can think of even just my sisters, but um, you – We were all brought up the same way. We were all brought up with those same beliefs and values and things, but that doesn't mean that you have to agree with them. You can still formulate your OWN opinion, and you can still, um, think, 'Well, no, I don't necessarily believe that just because somebody told me to believe that,' or those types of things. So I do think they DO start developing their own culture. I don't know at what point they do that, but um, but I think – I think we all have probably our own culture and the student even. (p. 70)

Magdalena initially associated student culture with individual identity, but then said that students did not know their own culture - culture referred to as traditions, religion, etc. So, like Tim, her culture outlook towards students bridged two themes.

I define culture as their own identity for the student too, because they made the connection, the culture – they don't know what is culture, you know. They don't know what is that, but I make the connection with them that the way they talk, the religion, their traditions, you know. (p. 38)

Socioeconomic status.

Although Ashley at first alluded to culture being individual, she focused on student culture being tied to resources. The idea was that material items, or the lack of them, played a defining role, even if temporary, in their perspective.

Culture is so vastly different even if from the same blood, if from the same family. Culture is really based on resources and different opportunities and even

in this country, it is tied to what they [students] appreciate and what they get excited about. (p. A2)

And.

Okay, the students in my classroom are very different in culture, like we talked about. I think, um, a lot of them are – a lot of their – They have a culture of poverty, a great deal of them, at least 50 percent if not more, which is a very different culture than one of wealth or enough. And that culture of poverty has a lot to do with just a neediness for things and – So that's a different culture I think, and they focus on different, um, they get excited by different things than other kids. (pp. 94-95)

Although he did not define student culture in terms of resources, Mijael joined Ashley in relating student culture and socioeconomic status to the classroom.

First of all, if we're going somewhere I say - and it costs money - I say, 'This is a - if you need help, let us know. There's a fund that we can help you.' Well, I'm the fund (laughs) you know, because I don't want kids to lose out on going on a field trip if they don't have money, like if we go to a movie or something....But I think it's just what they [students] bring, how they see themselves in the classroom and how they see themselves in the world, just kinda like interact, I mean, because you know, it's part of this socioeconomic status. (pp. 34-35)

Educational perspective.

Meanwhile, similar to Mijael, Mark recognized student culture in terms of students' relationship to education. "Student culture consists of all the methods and reasons groups of students employ in order to interpret and share their unique perspective on education within the context of the schools they attend," (p. A1).

Summary: definitions of student culture.

Teachers defined student culture largely in terms of ethnicity and as a part of their parents' culture. Raised in their definitions of student culture were the concepts that culture existed in terms of the individual and that socio-economic status constituted a key dimension of culture. Additionally, one teacher defined student culture as how a student participated in the classroom. See table below.

Table 11. Definitions of Student Culture

Definition	Number of Teachers	Names of Teachers
Ethnicity	3	Marissa, Philip, and Tim
Students are part of their families' culture	5	Tim, Cecilia, Lorna, Corwin Mijael
Within the individual	2	Jocelyn and Magdalena
Resource-related or socioeconomic status	1	Ashley
Education-related	1	Mark

Non-curricular cultural influences in the classroom.

This section elaborates on themes referenced in participants' definitions of culture, themes perceived as generating an influence in the classroom. It, then, relates their accounts of how they considered students' individual needs, culture and classroom assessment to coalesce in the classroom. Two of the themes in the definitions of students' culture arose in conversations with other teachers: socioeconomic status and parents. Because teachers portrayed them as playing a role in instruction and assessment, they are discussed further here. Students' socioeconomic status, in addition to being mentioned by Ashley and Mijael in their definitions, was referenced elsewhere by five other teachers: Cecilia, Mark, Lorna, Jocelyn, and Corwin. And five teachers - Tim, Cecilia, Mark, Jocelyn, and Magdalena - in addition to Philip and Mijael, also raised the issue of the presence of parents, physically or influentially or both, in the classroom. Two teachers mentioned ethnicity elsewhere, plus, Corwin noted the effect of technology in the classroom. Because teachers mentioned these different themes in their definitions of student culture and other teachers discussed them in reference to the classroom, I interpret the presence of these themes to reflect a role for culture in the classroom.

Technology.

Corwin, alone, espoused the view that technology impacted student attention in the classroom, resulting in "video kids." Corwin has indicated that he, particularly, assessed through visually evaluating students' representation of various items.

I mean the kids who spend their day in front of a TV set working video games – they have a whole different culture. They have a very artificial culture that's being – not imposed on them, but it's being pushed into their – into their psyche by that television and by whatever images are being produced by those video games. And it's kinda scary 'cause they're not always – most of the time they're really not very nice things, and so I mean, you have kids that are growing on an artificial culture coming out of that box and, uh, you can really see the difference. Kids today have a much shorter attention span. I mean, I've been doing this for 24 years. And the change in children as a whole is PRETTY dramatic. I see kids in here whose attention spans are longer and larger. They tend to be kids who don't watch much television, whose parents still, um, encourage reading or, uh, physical activity or basically ban their kids from watching TV and don't let them live in front of a video game. Those kids are very different from *video kids*. Video kids have very short attention spans, very short. (pp. 31-32)

Q: "Everything happens so fast on those video games, right?"

And everything's coming straight at you. You don't have to work. You don't have to think. It's just you're being fed images, constantly, constantly, constantly. Every five to six seconds, every two seconds, every one second. A new image is coming at you. You just have to sit and take it in. You don't have to think about it. You don't have to interact with it other than with your little joystick and, uh, it's really fast. And for a lot of them, it's really violent. I mean, even the little simple little Mario games, I mean, they're – Mario and his – the Mario brothers – they get squished – squished and blood and I mean, even at that level, it's violent. So, I mean it's – kids are changing. Yeah, and you know, cable TV, what kids can see now on cable TV, I NEVER saw that stuff. I mean, I'm dating myself, but I mean you can see ANY kind of violence you want. Depending on your cable package, you've got access to ANYTHING sexual that you could possibly imagine, you know. And kids if they're not being supervised, they're seeing hard core pornography at a very young age. I mean, I used to see it with kids' drawing, uh, really explicit pictures. First graders, because they've seen it. I mean, they don't know how to process it or how to understand, but they've seen the images, and, so, kids are just seeing – they're just exposed to so much more today than we were....So, I mean, there's so much more out there for them to see. I mean the whole notion of the Internet and what's there and how easy it is to come up with lots of really unusual things on the Internet, even by accident. If you don't have

good filters on your computers, which, you know, lot of people don't or don't even know about, I mean, anything is possible, ANYTHING. (pp. 32- 33)

Socioeconomic status.

According to the teachers, socioeconomic status manifested in the classroom. Mark asserted that it impacts student learning and, consequently, assessment outcomes.

and if you are low income, working class in this country, the – if you're going – If you're a betting person, your test scores on this crap we, uh, we give them are going to be very – are going to be low – plain and simple. Um, and I can go on about that, too. (p. 8).

Corwin agreed.

It's [assessment] going to come out really different and the kids with a lot more, uh, advantage you're going to see pretty outrageous drawings. I mean, it's shocking how good their drawings can be at this age. And the other thing is, uh, how kids can take simple concepts like this and start abstracting them, but it tends to be the kids who have more opportunity. (p. 29)

Corwin said, he definitely saw the effect of socioeconomic status in art expressions.

It's there. Money buys opportunity. Money buys, uh, you know, even in this area. There are kids who come in here with very, very natural abilities that are, you know, kind of precocious and, um, unusual, and it's just something that's in them. Uh, a lot of the kids who are INCREDIBLY good also come from very stable families, middle to upper – middle class or higher, educated families, families that appreciate art, uh, for the sake of art, uh, you know. Did I say educated? They do, and then you have the kids who just have natural talent, who come in here and really get released. And so, yeah, it's the same. I mean you see it. (pp. 28-29)

Mark further described how socio-economic status translates into both time with parents and opportunity.

dominant culture - dominant-language students whose parents are professionals. Um, I'm just going to sum this up – have access to everything they need – have access to virtually everything they need - for academic success. And that would be material things. It would be time with parents, um, because they can take time off, whereas if you're bussing tables at [an ethnic restaurant near the school where a student's parents both work] and you're doing three shifts a day, you know, you have far less control over, you know, when you take time off. Let's see, vacations....so just materials, vacations ... well, just having college-educated parents is a big advantage so – college grads as parents.And they [students] do well. So, I don't know if it has to be stated explicitly, and then those [students]

who don't [have those advantages], um, do less well – with some cross over. So, um, but this is GENERALLY though – The academic success generally, um, is less evident for students who lack – some – or all of - above, so there. (pp. 2-3)

Cecilia remarked, as did Jocelyn, on the effect of socio-economic status on student knowledge level. Magdalena said, “Yeah, they are low-income families, you know. Few – they are not educator. The father, the parents – they don't have education – for half of the class....They can no help much the student at home. That's our biggest problem here,” (p. 1). However, Lorna, said that socioeconomic status may, but not necessarily, reveal itself in the quality of the student's vocabulary.

Um – Generally some truths would be, and these are generally, um, children coming from a low socioeconomic background or from a household with low education level for their parents may not have as high of a vocabulary as students who come from the opposite background. Generally, that's true. But, you could have a child who comes from, uh, low socioeconomic background with low education in the household but yet comes in with an incredible vocabulary, because mom or dad have made them read since they were little. Maybe don't have time to do it themselves but are just absolutely, uh, committed to educating their child. And so, you have to take children one by one by one by one and figure it out that way. (p. 88)

Parents.

In addition to a socioeconomic influence, teachers regarded parents' attitudes as playing a role in students' education, directly and/or indirectly. Mark summed up his view of the importance of parents' role in children's educational process.

It [previous school] was just a working class environment and the assessments were what you get in a working-class environment without college-educated parents. You get LOW assessments, and they're on 'the list.' And they're in big trouble....we had the BEST teachers there and the BEST curriculum and ALL the money you could ask for. It doesn't make a BIT of difference. Doesn't make a BIT of difference. So, it doesn't. It's your home environment first, and then if you're someone like the girl I was describing. Or, um, maybe there are a few things in the school environment that can rectify the lack of what, you know, whatever it is you're missing academically at home. Um, that works for some kids, and so, (p. 6)

Philip spoke to a role that parents played in the learning, development and maintenance, as he perceived it, of not only relevant grade level knowledge that students should learn, but in fostering cultural biases.

That's really difficult, but really those - the attitudes between the two groups is very, very different towards learning. Towards me – the parents towards me. Um, the parents in one of the strands is, um, very - 'My kid's right. You're always picking on him'. (p. 8)

Q: "Is this the traditional strand?"

Uh-hmm (yes). Um, always takes the side of the student - um, 'always' being too strong a word. A lot of the times taking the side of the student, um - 'Their child can do no wrong', um. 'It's those Mexican kids' fault.' Um, you know, whatever the case may be. It's always kind of defensive. It's a very defensive kind of attitude. And they don't value education. Um, again 'they.' Again, some don't value education '...because well I hated school when I was...you know.' I'll be doing parent conferences and I'll be saying, 'You know, your student is really having a difficult time with reading comprehension' - and I said, 'You know, being able to decode is one thing, but being able to understand is reading. I can teach anybody how to decode words fabulously, but if they don't understand it, they're not reading.' 'Well reading's stupid anyway, you know. I went to eighth grade and, uh, that's all that I need to know.' And their student's sitting right there. So you know, there's a lot of undermining obviously. And so that attitude transfers there, so why should the student work? As opposed to other students from the dual-language track, uh, same conversation. 'What can I do to help my student learn?' It's more of a supportive, and 'Your student, you know, is really having a difficult time paying attention in class. They're always kinda talking.' And right there and then it's like, 'Okay, that's going to stop, I promise you, you know.' So those attitudes are so VASTLY different, and it's like – Wow! It's really eye opening to see and, um, I'm not sure. I'm not sure HOW you...how you address that, but we've tried.

Q: "How have you tried?"

We've tried by mixing the students up. At lunchtime, um, we have the students number off. And they'll sit by somebody they don't talk to a whole lot. We've taken four or five of these students and put them in that class, and four or five come in this class. Shake up all the students so that they're having to work on collaborative projects together just so they can see, you know, if you just took the time to talk you might discover that you're not so different, you know. And it happens, and here's the deal. What was that phrase? I think it said, um, 'People as individuals are like rational human beings, but in groups like pack animals.' (he laughs) So, when you take these – these students who have these really negative

attitudes and you put them in a situation where there is NOBODY else that has their attitude, or something similar to them, they ACTUALLY get along with the other kids. You know, it's almost like they have to prove something – there's some kind of peer pressure to act this way, or behave this way, or think this way. But once they're removed and they're placed in a situation to work with those students that they don't like so much and they're doing a project that is something that they both kind of enjoy doing, they're fine. (pp. 49-51)

Q: "And do you think you've made progress?"

We have. We have made a TREMENDOUS amount of progress, a tremendous amount of progress, um, but it's a LONG process, you know. It is a really difficult process. But we have made a tremendous amount of progress towards this. But, it's not something that we can do alone, you know. It's – it's gotta come from the home also, because that's where they're getting a LOT of, um, of the support or not. And often times, we feel like what we do at school sometimes gets undone at home, you know, towards that progress. (pp. 51-52)

Mark, too, noted a clash between the New Mexican and Mexican immigrant students - "the stereotypical thing ... the tension between New Mexico Hispanics and recent immigrants. Don't you dare call me a Mexican! and that sort of thing," (p. 10) Similarly, Mijael said,

So, just, yeah, their beliefs, how they behave. I think it's all part of a student's culture. Are they respectful? You know, it's amazing. I mean if I – It sounds to me like you were a classroom teacher at one point or not, or I don't know, but it's amazing, just a particular – how a particular culture perceives teachers, where one particular culture they're like, 'You know, I trust you completely. Do what you have to do.' And another is like they're right here making sure you're doing everything or you're doing that or doing that. And it's tied to culture, whether it's socioeconomic, if they make enough, they're well off. Or ethnicity. How they see a child's education versus one culture sees education a different way, just different things. (p. 36)

Joining Philip and Mijael with a similar perspective regarding the perception that Mexican parents hold a high esteem for education and teachers was Jocelyn, who said,

The parents come in on the first day, they drop them off. I have three parents that EVERY day come in and say, 'Have a great day. If you need anything, call me.' That's this child's warning to behave. And then, um, it's cute because they said, '*Hace me carga, maestra*'. And, you know, and that means, 'Okay, you'd better behave 'cause she's going to call me if you don't, you know.' And it's cute but then those same three parents – they pick their children up after school. 'How was he today? Any problems? Does he have homework?' 'Yes, he's got it in his planner', you know. Just a contact with them, very quick. Um, a lot of our parents

– our parents are very supportive of their children’s education, ESPECIALLY the parents that do come from Mexico, because education is SO important to them, you know. It’s not as easy access for them in Mexico. If you want a good school there sometimes you have to pay for it, and they don’t have access to that, ... most of the parents I would say every year, 95 percent of the parents, 98 percent of the parents, are very supportive....and again, I think it’s a cultural thing. (pp. 61-62)

Q: "What do you mean it’s a cultural thing?"

Oh, I’m sorry. I think it’s our Hispanic culture that kind of does that, and I don’t know, maybe it’s just our school culture. We’re very family oriented at [name of school]. (pp. 61-62)I think especially the Mexican parents have a very high regard for teachers. They put us on this high pedestal. They don’t think that we’re equal with them. They put us WAY up here, and they, um, whatever you say goes, you know. Whatever the teacher says goes, and that’s not always necessarily a good thing, but it’s that they have that respect for you and they – they’re enchaining their child to you. They’re entrusting their child to you for, you know, for the whole day or whatever and they see you in that high regard. (p. 64)

Jocelyn appeared to suggest a difference between Mexican immigrant and Hispanic students' valuing of education.

Again, I’ll say the students from Mexico, and not necessarily - We have a lot of students from Mexico. That’s why I use that, because *they* value education. But even just the Hispanic students from this area, I think they were – they were brought up that education is so important because of – and especially because of the socioeconomic status of those. You know, you need an education to have a good job anymore, um, those types of things. (pp. 66-67)

Whereas Mijael, like Lorna, conceived of a difference in parental attitude based upon which population they participated in: residential or magnet. Mijael said,

And we have a – here because our school, we have a residential population and a transfer or magnet population. So those are two different cultures where you have the transfer students who are – their parents are aware of the program and they want children to participate. And so they’re like, ‘Okay, we’re bringing them for this reason. And then you have the residential population who are like, ‘Well, that’s what I get. This is my home school.’ And sometimes you’re for it and sometimes you’re like, you know, ‘I guess I have to. I have no other choice,’ which they do. But it’s still their home school and – So that’s two separate cultures within our school culture. (pp. 36-37)

Q: "Does that make a difference in the classroom?"

Uh, no. It's more - In my opinion it's more with the parents, and you know, comments like, 'Well, they should know that, or this or that, or you know.' It's like, 'No!' It's like, 'Well,' you know, just kind of talking down to people. You know what I mean. I don't have to. You know, you're a guest at our school. *Se quiere nicos, que se vaya bien.* (laughter) (p. 37)

Meanwhile, Tim appeared to regard student culture, at least in part, to reflect the level of education and resources of parents.

this speaks to, you know, to the difference in their cultural backgrounds. But you know, the kids who are from here ... because they're born here, because they have several generations here. Because, you know, in one case, you know, one's mom is a realtor and another one's mom is a teacher, they have - have a better idea, they're more closely acquainted with school culture. And so, I think that definitely allows them, um, that provides them with a definite advantage. Um, you know, kids coming from a Mexican culture or tradition have a different way in which they've interacted with schools in Mexico, you know. They don't question and they're not...I hate to generalize, but there's definitely a tradition of come and you drop your kids off and they come in and then you pick them up at the end of the day. And so, there's not a whole lot of, you know, direct hands-on involvement in the classroom, which is different from folks who are brought up around here, you know. People, you know, they've come to know the classroom and the way in which it works and how to get involved - do you know what I mean? (p. 34)

Ethnicity.

As far as ethnic make-up of students in the classroom, both Philip and Lorna noted that most students were of Hispanic, Latino or Indio background. Philip addressed diversity in terms of the individual.

And by diversity, I mean it's easy to say, yeah, you know 98 percent of our students are of Hispanic or Latino backgrounds and two percent are not and so forth. It's - I think that's an easy way to say, 'Yeah, the classroom's diverse.' But every student is diverse, you know. Every single one of them has their own history, their own practices, their own traditions, their own views on life. And to generalize that becomes a way of stereotyping, and I can't do that. (p. 31)

And Lorna said, “overall, the majority of our population that we serve is from that Hispano-Indio background,” (p. 16). She continued, recognizing that students may select ethnic categories and distinguish their own heritage.

Some would say ‘We’re Mexican.’ Some would say ‘We’re Mexican-American,’ which are different, you know. They have the same roots, but the way that they say it and the way they pronounce it and what they mean by it has a slightly different shade. So, some would say Mexican, some would say Mexican-American, some would say Hispanic, some would say Chicano, some would say American, even though they’re clearly of a maybe a Latino background, but their choice is to say American. Uh – Some kids who – they’re usually the kids who would also name themselves as Chicano, would also say, ‘I’m, um, Native and I’m also Mexican,’ or ‘I’m Native and I’m also Hispanic.’ They have that whole consciousness of like Hispano-Indio, or Mestizo, and so....So, we have children from all over Latin America as well. (pp. 15-16)

Parental programs.

While parents may influence their children's learning in nonstructural ways, such as attitudes, socio-economic status, and valuing of education, structured parental programs were reportedly available at the school level to influence parents' knowledge of, familiarity with and interaction in, as available, their children's academic environment. Although these programs may also have been available at other teachers' schools, only two teachers referenced them, Tim and Jocelyn, while Cecilia referenced a parental liaison at her school. Tim cited a program named *Bueno Fey*.

and I mean our school is a school that is sensitive I think ... I’ve had different projects going here in the classroom where I’ve had, you know, I’ve had parents in here working on things with the kids, and so, you know. And we have – we have a program; it’s called *Bueno Fey* and it’s through a nonprofit organization. But one of their things is that they’re really trying to promote involvement, and, particularly, this is involvement of mothers. And most of the mothers are Mexican immigrant mothers. In the classroom, we try to get them into the classroom and get them involved in their kids’ education, um, because that’s not - that 's not - that's not their experience....In some cases, they’re not highly literate, they haven’t finished school or – do you know what I’m saying? They don’t know what it is that they could bring to - to - to - to the classroom experience you know. (pp. 35-36)

Jocelyn's school reportedly featured a similar program, *Family Leadership Institute*. She said,

and it's teaching parents how to be better parents and getting involved with the schools, asking those questions. What are you teaching my child? Is it tied in with the standards? So, that they're educated and they're aware. Just because they're the teacher doesn't mean that they're doing what they're supposed to be doing. You know, accountability, accountability in that as well. (pp. 64-65)

Similarly, Cecilia said the parent liaison person at her school interacted with parents to facilitate their involvement in school activities.

But, um, our parent liaison - We have a parent room and she, uh, works very well with families and getting them organized and participating in certain events and having different family nights for different - for Math or for *Dia de los Muertos* [Day of the Dead], or for reading or what else? There's Science and - and just getting them involved and just trying to keep it down to their - their level. (p. 2)

Summary: Non-curricular cultural influences in the classroom.

As indicated in the table below, teachers' accounts of culture attested to a perception of culture perceived to play a role in student learning and in demonstration of that learning primarily through a student's socioeconomic status and parent's level of involvement in their child's academic endeavors. Two teachers mentioned ethnicity, one discussed technology. The importance that teachers placed on a parent's academic involvement is indicated in three of the teachers' acknowledgements that their schools had either parental programs designed to facilitate parental academic involvement or a parental liaison person.

Table 12. Non-curricular Cultural Influences in the Classroom

Definition	Number of Teachers	Names of Teachers
Socio-economic status	7	Ashley, Mijael, Mark, Lorna, Jocelyn, Cecilia and Corwin
Parents	7	Tim, Cecilia, Mark, Jocelyn, Magdalena, Philip and Mijael
Ethnicity	2	Philip and Lorna
Technology	1	Corwin
School Parental Programs	3	Tim, Jocelyn, and Cecilia

How individual needs, culture, learning and classroom assessment came together in the classroom.

Having seen how teachers reportedly perceive and constitute student culture and related features in their definitions, personal experiences and classrooms, this section focuses on how student individual needs, or characteristics, culture, learning and classroom assessment may interface. It consists of three parts: teachers' 1) narratives in response to the interview question on how they perceived that individual characteristics, culture and classroom assessment did, or did not, come together in their classrooms; 2) reports separate from their narratives of how they may have attended to students' individual needs, or culture, in classroom assessment practices; and 3) representative vignettes on how they accommodated individuals in the course of assessing learning. I collected teachers' comments on their students' needs/culture and assessment practices in addition to their responses to the interview question with the thought that perhaps they might reveal additional content, or perspectives, not broached in their direct responses and, thereby, contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers may have shaped their assessments to fit individual needs. However, because they do not constitute part of their responses to the question, they are presented separately. The few vignettes offered at the end provide a glimpse into teachers' contemplations coupled with their actual assessment practices and accommodations, as reported, with particular students.

Narratives.

Teachers' replies to the interview question are presented below. Themes that manifested are: students' individual characteristics, other and do not consider.

Individual student characteristics.

Marissa, Philip, Tim, Lorna, Mijael, Mark (as possible) and Magdalena (secretly)

admitted that they considered students' individual learning needs in their classroom assessments.

Marissa who previously said she allowed her students to express their knowledge in different ways based upon their characteristics said,

I have the one case of my student who likes to start and not finish things. Um, she won for the first time in the Science Fair. And this is a very gifted student, um, but she just never won, and so when I asked her what the difference was she felt, this year, she said, 'Well, I was able to do something that I wanted to do.' She chose her topic, um. And she said, and then, 'the other thing was that, uh, you believed in me.' Because I think we did, um, I - Well we did a classroom presentation where they practiced. And, I told her she presents very well. As an oral presenter, she's wonderful, and so I put her at the front of the class, and I don't think anybody had ever done that before, because she starts and doesn't finish. And I said, 'Look at her presentation. This is how I want all of you guys to look like.' And so, she took that to mean that she had the best presentation, and so the next day for the judges, she was awesome. She was one of the top 20 experiments in the school, and so that was - that was her thing, is that 'You believed in me, and I knew if I'm the best in class, I can do this and win.' Um, and so, um, I think that's the biggest. (pp. 35-36)

And.

she's a very eccentric child. um. She has little projects in her desk. I mean she'll play with glue and she'll do Science things in her desk, and her desk is really gross (laughs), but you know, I mean it's her property for the school year. And so, you know, I think sometimes it's not just our - our diverse students that suffer, um, it's also not just culturally diverse - but it's also the students that are different, have different learning styles, have different learning needs, um, that suffer from, um, sticking to one way of doing things....But if she finishes one out of five assessments in Math, as long as that one shows me that she knows the standard, I check it off for her, because she knows the standard. I'm not going to penalize her for - I mean, sure, study habits are important, but so is her self-esteem and her worth as a person. (pp. 37-39)

Similarly, Philip said,

And by getting to know them personally, um, it really provides me a great deal of insight as to how they learn best. What their, uh, strengths and their challenges are. And I will try to tailor my assessments, whether they be performance assessments, project-based assessments, presentations.(p. 17)

While Lorna said, "I would prefer to come from the standpoint of thinking every child is different and trying to match what is appropriate for a child to what they've shown me in class," (p. 87).

Initially, Magdalena did not respond when I asked her how students' different characteristics, backgrounds, learning and her assessment all came together. She remained still and silent. The next two times I asked, she said she treated all students in the same way. However, when I asked whether NCLB had any effect on her classroom assessment, she responded, "Yes, of course, because it's the same recipe for everybody. Yes," (p. 40). Q: "And do you think students - that that helps students' learning?" Magdalena: "No." Q: "How do you think it should be?"

I think - the problem with that is - the thing is we need - We have many program, but we need to adapt the program for the student; not the student to the program. That's what I see with that law....No, here it's just like you here and they give you a recipe. For everybody is the same. That's not true, even though when they do the state test they expect that the Special Ed student, the ELL student - everybody's going to take the same test. Do you understand what I mean? ... Yeah, and that's not fair, and we need to adapt the program for the necessita... necessities of the students and then adapt that program to them. That's what I do. (pp. 40-41)

Q: "I see. So, that's what YOU do in your classroom?" (p. 41). Magdalena: "Sometime, yes." Q: "Even though you still use the standard program and the standard test?"

But sometimes, because they tell us what to do it each day, but sometimes in dual programs, we need to do fluency every day. In the program it said two days, you know, and the program said that we need to read that story in one week. Dual language need two weeks, you understand? (p. 41)

Q: "So, you adapt it?"

I adapt it, of course - always - even though, you know, they watch me. Don't say - Even though they are, you know, around and check, but I know it doesn't work, because I'm here with them. Do you understand what I mean? That's what I do, sometime. I use the same program, the same test, but I adapt several things to the students. (p. 42)

And Mark said he considered individual circumstances as he could, but scripted curricula did not allow for it. Meanwhile, Mijael who taught at a school whose school philosophy was, he had said, to make learning culturally meaningful, said culture with classroom assessment was enhanced through a teacher-team approach.

Well, I think one of the ways that we do that, and I and other fifth grade teachers are - It's when - cause we meet as a team and so we're developing. Of course, we use the standards to guide our teaching, but when we're creating assignments or themes, again we look into - For example, in literature, uh, when we're mapping out our curriculum, we look at the story and what the message is, what the author's purpose is and teach the skills that we need to, but it - but more - But we select stories, either chapter books or from our basal that - that have some kind of cultural relevance to our population. So, we just don't read a story just to read a book. Again, I have to go back to saying how can the story - ? How can the kids connect to the stories? Um, assessing prior knowledge on the - on the topic is a good way to start doing graphic organizers. Something that they can share their experience so that when they're reading it they can understand it better and in turn comprehend it better and do better on the assessment because it's...so that they can kind of reintroduce the topic and I guess they share personal experience. Like if we're talking about intolerance, so then we generate, you know. When is there a time that, you know, that - has that ever happened to you? Has there been a time where people treated you different because of, you know, if you have money or what you look like? And that's how they start, you know, generating and what I think is just personal experiences, and then when we read the story, then they can connect better, and in turn when we assess them, they do better than just reading the story. (pp. 3-4)

Culture.

Meanwhile, Cecilia said she perceived culture to affect assessment when some students had less opportunity for access to knowledge than others. She, then, compensated, or prepared students, with a field trip to a state museum prior to the assessment.

I would say ... this isn't anything bad, this is just - A lot of these kids have not had lots of opportunities, a lot of our population. Some have. And the ones that have, you know, really have because their parents are very educated and want their kid to be bilingual and this and that. But some that haven't, um, - well the way it can affect - if you don't give them the opportunity, for example. I had a HUGE [state] unit that we had to do. And I knew the kids just, you know, we were talking. We were looking at pictures and I have a book [on the state], a set of 25 books for these kids, and they did these little Indian villages. And we were

talking about the three main groups of Native Americans living in [the state] and this and that. They were...And then there's one more. I had a big chart in my classroom. Anyways, um, but they just wouldn't, so what I did was I scheduled a big field trip to ['b' town]. Most of them had never left ['a' town] up north to ['b' town]. A lot of them had never been to ['b' town], and we went to the [name of museum]. But that's just an example of how their culture can affect an assessment, because if – if they have no idea what that is, and granted, yeah, we did learn a lot about it in class and we tried to make, um, the – whatever the other – the – I can't even think. They live in hogans. I'm trying – hogans is the next – the third type of – I can't think of – The pueblos, the tepees and the hogans were the three types of – Now, I'm trying to think of the name, but anyways, um, so that's just an example of how their culture does affect like an assessment. That's a quick example, you know. Sometimes if – if they don't, um, have that opportunity, if it's a certain skill or a concept that they need to know. (pp. 73-74)

On the other hand, Corwin, who taught art, described not how he accommodated student needs or characteristics, but how their individual background or culture can appear in their assessments.

I remember having some Mexican kids, I'll always have, but I remember these kids in particular at a school that I was at before. Real recent arrivals. And they had a very different attitude when they were writing stories and which they then they illustrated. But the stories were - and they were not happy endings. There was the princess, or there was the young girl. One in particular. The little girl, her father marries - it was a definite fairy tale - the evil stepmother. And the evil step mother ends up killing her and burying her in the backyard. And where the little girl is buried, a beautiful cactus grows with flowers. And the mother goes out there to pick the flowers, and is poked by the cactus is poisoned and dies herself. (laughter) But I mean there's this whole idea that there's not the happy ending and that's because in her culture she grew up in a really rough place where there were not always happy endings. And I think in that culture it is not always the happy ending like here, it's always the happy ending. It's always something really sweet happens and the princess gets the prince. And everything works out just fine. And then I had Cuban kids. And the Cuban kids' stories were also very different. High levels of romanticism. Very, very different. And it's just because that culture has that high level of passion in it. It's not like erotic passion or love passion, but just passion. It's ok to be passionate in that culture. And so you would see that in their stories. And you look at American kids who have grown up in front of a TV or in front of a game boy. Their stories are just totally infused with that. Totally. Totally infused with it. It really shows up. A lot of the little boys all they want to draw is cars crashing or jets or tanks or people shooting because that's what they see in their games. Their games are just filled with that stuff - So, yeah, you do see it. (pp. 56-58)

Do not consider.

Two teachers - Ashley and Jocelyn, - said that they did not shape their classroom assessments to accommodate individual students or their culture. However, Ashley said that she did not because she had already accommodated for diverse students in instruction. Ashley said,

I don't change the assessments based on the culture of the kids, because really, the way I teach has already done that. The way I've taught, the way I teach it is already, um, and the way that their – the projects that they do, I've already considered their different learning styles and their different cultural backgrounds. They don't – we don't need to have a different culture; although I think that – I guess where that would come into play is that they choose their subject. So, maybe culture would come into play with perhaps a child from Mexico who has a Mexican culture. Immigrant, recent immigrant, last three years or something, would choose an animal from their area where they grew up, so that's how the culture comes into play. (pp. 89-90)

Meanwhile, Jocelyn said she just did not think about it. She said, "Honestly, I've never really thought about those types of things when I'm making my assessment," (p. 46).

Summary: narratives.

As illustrated in the following table, of the eleven teachers, 8 reported that they made allowances for students' needs or culture either in their classroom assessments or in their pedagogy prior to classroom assessment. Seven teachers said that how culture, student needs, learning and classroom assessment came together in their classrooms is by directly shaping assessments to fit their students' individual needs. Two teachers said they accommodated their assessments for individuals and culture in their teaching prior to assessment. And one teacher said she had never considered it. One teacher said he witnessed the effects of student background in art by the type of orientation that students brought to their work.

Table 13. How Individual Needs, Culture and Classroom Assessment Come Together in the Classroom: By narratives

Theme	Number of Teachers	Names of Teachers
Individual student characteristics	7	Marissa, Philip, Tim, Mijael, Lorna, Mark (as possible) and Magdalena (secretly)
Culture	2	Cecilia and Corwin
Do not consider	2	Ashley and Jocelyn

Cited Practices.

In addition to their narratives, during the course of the interviews, teachers occasionally offered comments which reflected an awareness and attentiveness to student needs and accounts of what they said they did to adapt their assessment practices as a result of having perceived those needs. Their accounts are grouped by topic and include: 1) individual oral assessment, dictation or use of the computer; 2) retaking assessments; 3) reducing the number of questions; 4) time; 5) re-organizing assessments; 6) summative assessments; 7) academic vocabulary; 8) open-ended questions/assessments; 9) vocabulary; 10) language modifications: combining, replacing and translating; and not compromising standards. Pivotal and preliminary to teachers adopting these strategies may have been the role of affect, motivating teachers to act on the perceptions that students had varying needs that may have benefitted from further assessment consideration.

The Role of Affect.

I define affect as a sense of sympathy, or empathy, for the student in a particular type of situation. Four teachers either directly or indirectly suggested the importance of affect in their decisions to render assessments more available, in their opinions, to students.

Tim characterized affect as "sensitivity." "And there's always sensitivity, you know, on her [his DL partner, Cecilia's] part and on mine, for a kid, you know," (p. 26). The role of affect

may be discerned from Cecilia's language in her acknowledgement that she "did sit" with "two extreme Spanish mono-lingual kids" during a math assessment.

it was very difficult for them to learn all these terms and angles and this and that, but accommodating those kids I did sit with them. And at times for the actual instruction, the directions, I would tell them in Spanish. And I would say, 'Remember that day ' 'Okay, I know.' And then they would remember the word or the skill or what to do. And that's just one example for accommodating during an assessment my two students that - and you know, the assessment was given to them in English. And I mean there's just no way - They got here and I can't just be like, 'Here you go; figure it out, goodbye.' I mean they just got here. They've only been here a year. I can't just - cause that's just setting them up for failure. When I do know that they've been learning and participating and wanting - wanting so much to do, to achieve. (pp. 39-40)

When Mark described making math manipulatives, such as trapezoid templates, available to students during an assessment, his reasoning for doing so emerged. "It could be you're overcoming language, it could be you're overcoming, um, sort of the affective, uh, domain of the student, um," (p. 63) I asked: "How would you deal with the affective domain, aside from the manipulatives? He replied.

[by] um, reminding the kids verbally, um, that they've already - that they already know this stuff....Um, and giving lots of positive encouragement ahead of time, saying, 'You know this stuff. You guys are the experts. You did the experiment; now show us what you know' and presenting assessment in a positive light as opposed to a negative punitive light which is the way that this No Child Left Behind endorsed standardized tests are presented to the public schools, so - (p. 63)

As a practice, retaking assessments was referred to in the chapter on classroom assessment, here separate text goes to the affect behind the decision to alter either the assessment process or content. Because students have circumstances arise in their lives, Philip said he worked every day to know how his students were and what was happening in their lives. And, consequently, sometimes, he either re-assessed or re-shaped assessments for individual students.

Sometimes I've had students here who 've come from homes that are very troubled. And they may be up 'til three in the morning because they've had no

supervision or they're in charge of their little brother or little sister, what not. And I can clearly tell the fatigue is there, but it's the day of the assessment. So, I will either, depending on, you know, time and the needs of the entire classroom, allow them - allow them to take the assessment, or um, after the assessment is done and I see how they did and I - just that you know - You know your students so WELL and you've gotten to know them so well that in your gut - and I know this isn't measurable - but in your gut you KNOW that they understood more than they demonstrated....And I will - I will try and make myself as - as aware of what the difficult situations are for the students every day. So that if I have an assessment sometimes I need to make sure that the questions that I've asked aren't going to hit a nerve. (pp. 32-33)

Individual oral assessment, dictation and computer use.

Because students were perceived to have difficulty either writing or spelling, Marissa, Philip, Lorna, Magdalena and Jocelyn said they allowed them to convey their knowledge by either telling them, or another student, or using the computer. Philip's comment below exemplifies the use of oral assessment.

Um, and I have students that really can't write very well, um, and in that situation I will just have them tell me the answers, you know. 'Tell me what you think.' So, it's kind of like an interview process for them, because really I don't want that disability, or um, (sigh) lack of development to hinder their ability to communicate with me that they're understanding what's happening. (pp. 30-31)

Lorna referred to the accommodation of dictation:

They just at some point have to learn how to write, um. And if somebody hasn't helped them by this point, you have to help them, um, although to get the content done sometimes I could take dictation so that they're progressing with the writing as well...If we're working on handwriting, I'm not going to write for the child unless it's to model. But if what we're doing is working on the writing process, what does handwriting have to do with the writing process? Not very much. (pp. 45-46)

While Marissa allowed a student who could not write well to type his assessment answers:

I have one student that has a hard, hard time writing, but he's really good at typing. He can, you know - he - I don't know. From here to here, it's just I guess too much for him, um, but it's easy for him to think and type at the same time, and he's really fast, so I just have him type everything - his journals, his reading responses, his essays - he just types everything. I have an iPod shuffle and I just -

because I – if, um, if I've made the test, he can just type in his answers for me, and then he'll just print it. (pp. 20-21)

Summative assessments.

Lorna suggested that she implemented accommodations for individual differences on summative assessments by assessing not only verbally, but allowed them to assess in other ways, as well.

Let's say maybe they didn't do their BEST effort on all the practice opportunities along the way. They didn't participate in class discussion, so on and so forth, so the fact that they don't do well on the summative assessment is really a matter of personal responsibility and they have to - Their big thing for students like that is - is probably development. A little bit of development maturity, um, possibly, um, buying into their learning. Maybe they've haven't been given a reason to buy into it [assessment]. Or maybe they've been offered reasons but they just - they're just not connecting yet for some reason. So, it's a process of looking and keeping - looking for more reasons, trying to present those reasons to them in different ways. Um - Another possibility is they got it, but they're being assessed in a way that they're not able to show it. So sometimes what I've done is asked a child questions orally or um asked them if there's another way that they can show me 'cause sometimes they can come up with a way that I haven't thought of. (p. 31-32)

Open-ended questions and assessments

Mark, Philip, Ashley and Lorna were among the teachers who noted that open-ended assessments gave students freedom to express what they knew in ways appropriate for them. For example, Lorna said,

And usually most of the assessments that we do are very open-ended, where what a child produces really is very much aligned to their ability. It's kind of like what they'll do with it is very representative of what they're able to do and their understanding of whatever is going on, um. (p. 73)

Reducing the number of questions.

Magdalena, Lorna and Mijael stated that they reduced the number of questions for some students. Magdalena said,

I will give a Science test with 10 questions, okay. For my ELL, I will re-state the questions and probably I will ask five major questions, you know, major concepts, because they don't have enough English to write or to answer or to write fast. So, I gave them five, but the most important that they need to learn. That's the way I do it. (p. 13)

Mijael extended the basis for that accommodation beyond language knowledge to content knowledge.

So, I, um, if that student is - If I know for a fact that he - that math is not their strong subject, even as far as a reduction of what they have to do, instead of doing five things, like, 'Okay, show me these two things, but do them well. Um, So, that's a way to just - I guess modifications based on individual needs. (pp. 10-11)

Time.

Both Mark and Mijael said that they gave extra time to students whom they believed needed additional time on assessments. Mijael said,

Yeah, again, let's use Math, for example. Our, you know, our Math program assessments, um, I would definitely allow for more time. It's untimed. So, I would never - as long as the student is working. I think that's one way to meet a student's need is if they just take a little bit longer, you don't want to penalize them by saying 'You only have 30 minutes.' So, if they continue to work they can continue. Uh, again for second-language learners, because that's what we have here. Either they're learning Spanish or they're learning English. (p. 10)

Reorganizing assessments.

Cecilia with a bit of affect admitted that she adjusted assessments for students by, at times, re-organizing it for them.

And organize it for them. I mean, sometimes the things that they [students] are asked to do is just very overwhelming, and people - Adults in this state and in the world, um not the world, - But instead of focusing on actually really, really knowing that concept, they're too worried about briefly touching on something and then, here you go, 'Do answer these five things in this one question.' Sometimes - so what I do is, you know, the concept is still there, the skills is still there, but just help them organize what they need to do and understand and just - it's still there. It's still the same thing. It's just - (p. 56)

Academic vocabulary.

Mijael, Jocelyn, Lorna and Tim elaborated on the importance of students learning academic vocabulary. Although not an accommodation practice per se, I perceive it, as a pre-assessment accommodation. The reason why I characterize it as a pre-assessment accommodation as opposed to teaching in general, is because I interpret it as presented for the express purpose of improving student assessment performance. Lorna related academic vocabulary to "cultural capital."

Even hearing the word 'framework', even hearing the words 'structures, theory, reason,' you know, all these kind of language, um, What's the word I want to use? Um, not language structures but language functions that are very academic is really important. Kids need to learn academic, um, language functions like 'reason about this, uh, articulate this, expand it, clarify it,' so on and so forth when they're being assessed. Because it's that type of cultural capital, knowing those fancy words that helps them to be able to participate in classes and in programs which will give them access to bigger and better things to be able to take care of themselves better in the future. But so this is something they get in their hands when they're writing. And they can go step by step and say, 'Okay in this stage this is what I need to do. In this stage this is what I need to do. In this stage this is what the structure of my essay needs to look like.' And this we only give to them after we've gone through it very articulated. So we go step, by step, by step, by step, and every step. This is a good one to show you that when they're learning how to write commentary. Again, you see the sentence starters and you also see a bunch of words that they're given, so here below you will find words that are often used when commenting or giving your opinion. 'Analyze, compare, dissect, inspect, take apart and list,' so on and so forth. This one we work through painstakingly. They learn the process step by step, by step. (pp. 43-44)

Vocabulary translations.

Because of the seemingly importance of academic vocabulary to teachers, Tim, Philip, Cecilia, Mark, Lorna, Magdalena and Mijael said they chose to accommodate students by translating "key vocabulary" (Mijael, p. 10) for them. Mijael, below, reflected the general consensus that if students needed a particular word translated to understand, teachers would translate it.

If it's within my power to [rephrase a word]. If I'm creating the assessment, then I know what my kids are looking for, or how to word it so they understand it. But if it's something that's from a Math program or a reading program, then I guess you make accommodations as you see fit so that the students can understand. (p. 11)

Similarly, Tim said,

there's a huge issue with like, uh - I don't know if it's - I could pull it out of the math test/example but vocabulary can become - and-well some of it is academic vocabulary....it's issues with translation....So, I mean, again, you know, for ME if we're trying to assess reading or assess a kid's computational ability and, uh, particularly with Math, if - if - if the issue is vocabulary - you know what I'm saying? Well, then, there's a certain barrier to getting at what it is that you're hoping to get at, right? (pp. 27-28)

Q: "So, then, what do you do with that?" Tim: "Well, I just - I - I - I give it to them in - in - in some kind of term or way in which that - that's absolutely accessible to them," (p. 28).

Language: combining, replacing and translating.

Jocelyn, Cecilia, Mark, Magdalena and Mijael conceded that at times they revised the language of the assessment. Jocelyn said if students had trouble writing all in one language, she allowed them to write in both, writing what they could in English and the rest in Spanish.

If they can't do it in English, they can at least write it in Spanish, so - And that's another thing I allow my students to do, um, for example, right now we're doing Math and English. If they - I tell them if you can't write everything in English, write what you do know. Utilize the little bit that you do know (p. 20)

Magdalena said she would translate the test, or parts of it, for students because "they have sometime bad, bad, bad translation, so I modify that, because if I don't do that, they won't understand ... some questions are wrong, so I check before I give I gave it to them the test. Even the Reading," (p. 5). Whereas, Cecilia indicated that in addition to translating directions, she would "re-explain" and then "show" them something.

I need to assure them and then maybe the actual directions just let them know in Spanish, um, you know - Because if not they'll - It's just overwhelming and they just - They'll stress out and they just will not do well ... You know, of course, expectations are to do wonderful, but with - as a teacher you need to know

they're not going to be perfect. Because if you could see certain signs here and they that they were able to kind of understand, then you're doing your job. That's what it's all about, especially with those. I remember – poor things. Sometimes they were just sad. I'd have to re-explain and then show. It's a lot of work. (p. 42)

Magdalena also indicated that she enabled students to replace an English version of a test with a Spanish version, or vice versa, if she thought the students needed it.

Yes...I mean she's a Spanish speaker, so I will test her in Spanish only. This is her first year in English, so I'm going to start testing her in English, you know, like a few words, you know, in English, like 'you, I,' you know. I'm going to test - assess her in another way in English. It's kind of hard to explain because is so many people here. I have an English speaker only here (laughs), so is the reverse, you know. I'm teaching her Spanish, but she takes all the tests in English, so I need to gave to her all the tests in English, because she's an English speaker only. So, I need to start teaching her Spanish from the bottom. (p. 30-31)

No compromising on standards.

Mark said that while he might shape assessments for students when he could, he would not compromise on their knowing the standards.

A standard's a standard. A standard's a standard. So, I would have to determine, does this child know what an atom is, the parts, and can tell me?...Do you - have you met the standard or not, but meeting the standards means, Have you jumped over the bar? And you can jump, um, barely over the bar, um, comfortably over the bar, way over the bar, you know. It's just getting over the bar, and it's simply not comparing students to students, which is the old way that's still being promoted by, um, the nefarious forces of No Child Left Behind, comparing kids to kids. But standardized instruction doesn't do that. It took me years to understand the difference, um, but it doesn't do that. It said, 'This is what we would like for you to know. Do you know it well enough? And we understand that past that basic knowledge the range is huge, even past that, but what's the bottom line here? And so you can meet that bottom line. But no, I don't. Uh, there's no, you know, fudging on that, but I kind of like that. I mean, you know, because there's a fine line, even when you're talking about - I mean the huge political debate about, um, affirmative action, and there are plenty of minorities in America who say they HATE affirmative action, because they don't want to go through their whole career people thinking - oh, she got that job just because she's African-American, or that was a huge factor in her being promoted. They DON'T WANT that. I understand that, you know. However, I also think that there's a place for it. Now how do you thrash that out? I don't know, you know. It's like, does everyone get to raise their hand and say I want it applied to my life or I don't want it applied to mine? I don't know, but I think in this case, um, to at some point

know you are not going to say, 'Well, I'm going to push him over the bar simply because I know he's homeless, his mom.' You know - no! I'm not going to do that, because at that point I think that you are - you've moved into the arena where you are doing a disservice to the child, because you've lowered it in a sense artificially, um. And given them a false sense of accomplishment. (pp. 54 - 58)

Summary: practices.

Teachers revealed in their comments that they made allowances for individual needs in their classroom assessment practices through the following and the number of teachers who did so is indicated in parentheses: 1) the role of affect (3); 2) individual oral assessment, dictation or computer use (5); 3) in summative assessments (1); 4) through open-ended questions and assessments (3); 5) reducing the number of questions on an assessment (3); 6) reorganizing assessments (1); 7) making academic vocabulary available to students (4); 8) vocabulary translations (7); and 9) language modifications: combining, replacing and translating them (5), plus not compromising standards (1). Table 14 illustrates the above.

Table 14. How Individual Needs, Culture and Classroom Assessment Come Together in the Classroom: By cited practices

Practice	Number of Teachers	Names of Teachers
Role of affect	4	Tim, Cecilia, Mark and Philip
Individual oral assessment, dictation or use of the computer	5	Marissa, Philip, Lorna, Magdalena and Jocelyn
On summative assessments	1	Lorna
Open-ended questions and assessments	4	Mark, Philip, Ashley and Lorna
Reducing the number of questions	3	Magdalena, Lorna and Mijael
Time	2	Mark and Mijael
Re-organizing assessments	1	Cecilia
Academic vocabulary	4	Mijael, Jocelyn, Lorna and Tim
Vocabulary translations	7	Tim, Philip, Cecilia, Mark, Lorna, Magdalena and Mijael
Language modifications: Combining, replacing and translating	5	Jocelyn, Cecilia, Mark, Magdalena and Mijael

Not compromising standards	1	Mark
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Vignettes.

The following three stories reveal how teachers have reportedly taken into consideration the individual needs of students on assessments. Marissa told of a fifth grader who she knew needed help on assessments.

I have another student who, um, doesn't really - he doesn't really like to type, and he doesn't really like to write, so I have him paired up with another student that I've trained to, um, either take dictation for him or, um, just kind of, you know, sit there with him and motivate him, and it's - this particular student finishes her tests in like five minutes. This is one of my gifted students. Uh-hmm, but I do believe that they need to be - [gifted and non-gifted students together] It just can't be any gifted student. It has to be - they have to have particular characteristics, like patience. Uh, like, um, they have to know how to talk to them, not give them the answers but guide them through things so, you know, at the beginning of the year I do that until I notice that maybe somebody has a potential to be able to help, um, because it does - By fifth grade, it gets really embarrassing if the teacher's sitting there with you, especially if you're a boy. They don't like it, and so, otherwise, they wouldn't ask for help. So, that's why I try to use somebody else. (pp. 21-22)

Q: "So, a fellow student will work better than if you were sitting there?" Marissa replied, "Oh, yeah. I think with, um, with this particular child, especially it works that way, because he's just too cool for me right now (laughs)," (pp. 25-26). However, Tim sat at a table with a "quiet girl" and gently asked what she knew.

I have a little gal in here ... And she was a kiddo who really developed, you know, in that sense, in a social sense because I mean she was extremely quiet, but - And it's interesting because initially, you know, I had no idea. It's hard to gauge, or have some, you know, understanding about what they're able to do and what they know and what they don't know. And I mean it turned out she's a brilliant kid, you know. And these are probably the kinds of kids that, you know, oftentimes wind up not getting referred to things like, you know, enrichment programs and these kinds of things. But just, you know, kind of probing. And again, you know, sitting in at her table and asking questions and really trying to make kids feel comfortable and all right with - with - with - sharing what they know. (p. 10)

Ashley's story reveals how she said she provided modifications for three of her students on an assessment input chart.

So, you know, little Francisco who is really D level, you know, has a LOT of problems with everything, he could still get the same grade, as you know, Victor, who is gifted, because he did all his elements. It's really based on, um, I guess, just commitment to finishing it [assessment] and really focusing on it. But then again, you know we've got Michael who is just - has every issue you could imagine - ADHD, very violent, has to be removed from the classroom a lot because he attacks other kids, but Michael is so gifted that he does three. He doesn't do one. He doesn't do one hero study. He does three, because Michael moves at such a pace that if you don't challenge him - he needs three. Now Francisco, you know, probably needs the assistant to really help him get through his entire project. Does that make sense? Somebody's got to sit with him and sort of partner with him. And then we've got, you know, Maya, who's not like - is very, you know, very motivated and very, um, what's the word for that? She's very recognition oriented and loving and likes to help others and this kind of thing. Sociable, and so Maya finishes her project way early, and then I'll partner her with Francisco, so she gets the benefit of also learning about his person he chose, not just hers. (pp. 63-64)

Summary

The three discourses portrayed actual students for whom the teachers in question reportedly accommodated their assessments. The individual needs students reportedly exhibited that generated the accommodations were being: 1) gifted and working in an atypical manner; 2) extremely quiet and shy; and 3) below grade level in performance; gifted, but violent; and very recognition-oriented.

Domain Summary

This section finds that are sensitive to the role of culture and to students having individual needs. Moreover, based on teachers' admissions, adjustments were often made for a specific student with distinct needs, whether those needs were learning, handwriting, language, emotions, familial events or economic. However, teachers appeared to view culture with a broad perspective that affected students generally, such as through their socioeconomic status or the level of their parents' educations. The way student culture seemed to manifest in the classroom for teachers was through students' access to educational opportunities and technology, familiarity

with language and educational vocabulary. One teacher adapted her classroom practice to take her class to a state museum when they could not grasp what she was teaching them because she perceived most students as not having been exposed to some of the state's dominant historical features. In conclusion, teachers in this sample do appear, based on their statements, to accommodate students' culture generally within instruction. And as indicated in previous chapters, they also adapted their assessment practices for the individual student as they perceived the need and as they perceived that they could do so legitimately, and occasionally when it may not have been condoned administratively were it known.

Analysis

This analysis seeks to answer the research question in terms of what teachers report that they do to incorporate student culture within their classroom assessment practices. To arrive at an answer, I examined four sets of teacher responses. First, I reviewed their general definitions of culture, and, secondly, their definitions of student culture. I also looked at teachers' descriptions of their classroom practices in addition to how they responded to the question of how classroom assessment, learning, culture and individual differences came together in their classrooms.

I asked for both culture definitions because I felt there might be a difference between a stated and a working definition of culture, or between how participants might conceptualize culture in and out of the classroom. To review, I interpreted their general culture definitions and themes with number of teachers expressing each as 1) traditions, religions, foods, music, values, etc., (7-Tim, Marissa, Cecilia, Mark, Jocelyn, Magdalena and Corwin) reflecting a "traditional" definition of culture, an organic body of knowledge typically handed down between generations (Levinson & Holland, 1966); 2) ways of behaving (2-Ashley and Mijael); and 3) as within the

individual (2-Philip and Lorna), suggesting, perhaps a more agency and- and process- oriented view of culture (Levinson & Holland, 1966; Gonzalez, 2005). To review student culture, I interpreted their definitions with number of teachers expressing each as demonstrating ethnicity (3-Marissa, Philip and Tim); students as part of their family's culture, (Tim, Cecilia, Lorna, Corwin and Mijael); as within the individual, (2-Jocelyn and Magdalena); socio-economic status, (1-Ashley) and the culture of education (1-Mark). (One teacher who mentioned ethnicity also mentioned students as part of family culture - Tim.)

However, rather than being different, definitions seemed to overlap. For one, the traditional definition of culture identified values and ethnicity, while the student culture definition referenced ethnicity and students reflecting their parents' culture, which may be equated with values. When discussing student culture, a factor that surfaced within ethnicity that did not appear in the teachers' general characterization of culture was a perceived culture clash between New Mexican Hispanic and Mexican immigrant students. Although elaborated on by Philip, it was also referenced later by Mark and Tim, as well as by Jocelyn. However, it did not appear that ethnicity per se was the issue of divisiveness between the two sets of students. Rather, the point of contention may be that the Mexican students exhibited just the characteristics or attributes that the New Mexican students sought to not exhibit. According to Philip, it was how the Mexican students dressed, spoke and conducted themselves that reportedly annoyed the New Mexican students, primarily because they sought to amalgamate themselves within what they perceived as the American culture. Perhaps because of the differing sets of student values associated with their ethnic cultures, teachers, themselves, seemed to be more highly aware of students' ethnicities, in general.

And when teachers reflected on their classroom practices, they revealed an awareness of non-curricular cultural influences in their classrooms. These centered on students' socioeconomic status, (7-Ashley, Mijael, Mark, Lorna, Jocelyn, Cecilia and Corwin); the role of parents, (7-Tim, Cecilia, Mark, Jocelyn, Magdalena, Philip and Mijael); school parental programs, (3-Tim, Jocelyn and Cecilia); ethnicity, (2-Philip and Lorna); and technology, (1-Corwin). The appearance again of these elements - socioeconomic status, the role of parents and ethnicity - in their classroom practice descriptions supports the interpretation that, one, teachers were sensitive to the role of culture and, two, that this was how culture primarily manifested for them.

After asking teachers to describe their classroom practices and definitions of culture, I asked them to discuss how culture, individual needs or differences, learning and classroom assessment came together in the classroom. I posed the question in this manner in order to not coach or steer them toward culture. In response to the question, seven teachers (Marissa, Philip, Tim, Mijael, Lorna, Mark, as possible, and Magdalena, secretly) acknowledged that they considered individual needs in their classroom assessments for students. While denying that she changed assessment for a student's culture, Lorna, nevertheless, admitted that she considered individual needs in assessment. She said, "I would prefer to come from the standpoint of thinking every child is different and trying to match what is appropriate for a child to what they've shown me in class," (p. 87). However, elsewhere, she addressed "cultural capital" when she identified the importance of students learning vocabulary to improve performance on assessment, vocabulary that she termed, "language functions," (pp. 43-44). While Lorna may not change a classroom assessment because of a student's culture per se, her reference to culture capital indicated she seemed attuned to the effect that culture could have on students' ability to navigate assessments, and, more likely, standardized assessments.

And one teacher, Cecilia, mentioned culture in reference to assessment. She said, culture affected assessments because "a lot of these kids have not had lots of opportunities," (pp. 73-74). Two points are significant here about her narrative. One, her reference was not to adapting her assessment for culture, but to giving students the opportunity to learn prior to assessment. And, two, she was not considering one or two students, but a group of students, "a lot of these kids," (pp. 73-74). Additionally, her reference was to students' background and socioeconomic resources, or lack of them, and that impact on learning, and, consequently, on assessment. So, Cecilia's reference to culture and assessment did not indicate changing or accommodating an assessment because of a student's culture, but of providing a learning opportunity prior to assessment for a group of students. Consequently, Cecilia's conception of culture appeared in terms of a socioeconomic-related variable that had learning consequences. She was taking pre-emptive measures to provide them with the opportunity to learn and perform better prior to an assessment. Thus, her reference does not support adapting an assessment for culture.

Also reflecting an awareness of culture that, he said, demonstrated on assessment, was Corwin. He cited characteristics that he associated with students' ethnic backgrounds - Mexican, Cuban and American - and lifestyles that he said manifested in students' art or stories.

Of the seven teachers who indicated awareness and accommodation of individual differences when assessing, five appeared to allow for individual learning needs consistently as possible; one indicated he did so as he could due to the stipulation for fidelity towards scripted curricula; and one teacher revealed that she did so secretly because of administrative direction to assess all students in the same manner. Of the two teachers who indicated that culture was associated with assessment, one seemed to have perceived culture in terms of economic resources related to opportunity to learn and the other related culture to ethnicity and lifestyle, or

background. But neither indicated adapting an assessment because of culture. Plus, two teachers said they did not adapt assessment for student culture: Ashley and Jocelyn. Ashley said, "I don't change the assessments based on the culture of the kids," (pp. 89-90). Jocelyn said, "Honestly, I've never really thought about those types of things when I'm making my assessment," (p. 46).

Based on teachers' responses, seven said they attended to individual student differences within assessment, two conceived of how culture may manifest on assessment, and two said they did not adapt their assessment because of student culture. Overall, participants did not claim to modify their classroom assessments to accommodate student culture per se. Culture appeared to manifest for them in the form of group-related instructional constructs rather than as factors they would consider somehow providing for within their classroom assessments. Further study would be needed to bear this out.

Given that teachers acknowledged shaping their classroom assessments on behalf of student individuality, which could include culture, I wanted to know how they did so. Based upon teachers' statements (and also noted in the classroom assessment chapter), and including Jocelyn's, they did so primarily through the form of the assessment: orally, the use of the computer or with dictation (5 - Marissa, Philip, Lorna, Magdalena and Jocelyn); open-ended questions and assessments (4 - Mark, Philip, Ashley and Lorna); and summative assessments (1 - Lorna). Teachers also said they reduced the number of questions on assessments (3-Magdalena, Lorna and Mijael); provided extended time on assessments (2-Mijael and Mark); made academic vocabulary available on assessments (4-Mijael, Jocelyn, Lorna and Tim); translated vocabulary (7-Tim, Philip, Cecilia, Mark, Lorna, Magdalena and Mijael) and revised the language of the assessment (5-Jocelyn, Cecilia, Mark, Magdalena and Mijael). What appeared to influence teachers' decisions to take these types of actions on behalf of students in their classroom

assessment practices may have been the role of affect. Not a research question, the matter of why teachers would take action contrary to administrative direction to observe fidelity necessarily arises. Because only four teachers, Philip, Cecilia, Mark and Tim directly or indirectly expressed what I interpret as affect or feeling making a difference, this tentative explanation is simply that: tentative. Again, further research would be needed to answer the question. However, some affect emanated, unsolicited, from teachers while they were describing their practices. Explaining why she "sat" with two Mexican immigrant students, Cecilia said, "there's just no way - They got here and I can't just be like, 'Here you go; figure it, out, goodbye,'" (pp. 39-40). Tim said he had "sensitivity" toward students (p. 26). Mark said he dealt with the "affective domain" by giving students positive encouragement during an assessment and allowing them to use manipulatives. And Philip described awareness of students who may have "troubled" homes and the effect that may have on their assessments, motivating him to allow students to re-assess if he knows in his "gut" that they know the material, (pp. 32-33).

Summary

To conclude, it appears that although teachers were mindful of cultural factors, they did not report directing their attention toward generating, or modifying, classroom assessments because of student culture per se. However, teachers appeared to purposefully structure their assessments to account for individual differences and learning by providing a level of student choice in assessment format. This chapter finding correlates with that in the chapter on classroom assessment, thus, providing a measure of corroboration between the two data sets. As such, this corroboration lends support to the validity (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2004) of this particular finding. In addition, teachers appeared to make other assessment concessions for students, such as, translating key vocabulary and extending time on assessments. The role of

affect may explain why teachers did so. However, some teachers reported having administrative support to differentiate assessment and render assessments meaningful to students. The extent to which they may have done so with administrative support is, nevertheless, a question. Their conceptions of what they conceived as being in the students' best interests did seem, on the whole and at times, to supersede those of the administration. Teachers' biographical narratives suggested that some teachers appeared to be aware of the effect of their own culture and learning experiences in informing their pedagogy. Perhaps a correlation may exist between teachers whose biography informed their instruction and those who modified their own assessment conduct on behalf of students.

Chapter 9

Discussion

Introduction

Through a set of semi-structured interviews, I sought to learn the reported perceptions of how a sample of dual language teachers, predominately grades four and five, may include student culture within their classroom assessment practices. I also wanted to discover participants' possible use of formative assessment in the classroom, especially if, perhaps, they combined it with aspects related to student culture. I thought integrating material, ways of learning, or other methods culturally-relevant to students with the demonstrated effective educational intervention of formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b) could be a potentially powerful learning approach. In addition, some within the assessment community have noted a dearth of information about teachers' perspectives on assessment (Stiggins, 2005b). By focusing on what dual language teachers had to say about their work, this study may have helped to address this gap in the knowledge base.

As teachers talked with me about their work, they related stories about their own culture, demonstrated their sensitivity to student culture and indicated their accommodation of it in the classroom. In the telling of their stories, their strong commitment to their students' learning became apparent.

This chapter begins with a quick synopsis of the literature associating culture with learning; it provides the theoretical basis for the research. Next, I review parts of teachers' stories to show how I believe teachers may view culture in terms of themselves as well as how they may address student culture in the classroom. I continue and discuss findings related to student

individuality, classroom assessment and formative classroom assessment. I close with a look at teachers and their perceived context of large-scale testing.

Culture and Learning

Research strongly supports the role of culture in learning (e.g., Gipps, 1994; Nieto, 2004; Abedi & Gandara, 2006; Shepard, 2000; Elwood, 2006). As the term "culture" is typically used to portray within-group similarities, care must be taken not to over-generalize, or stereotype, features, or characteristics, common to a specific group and to recognize and respect personal differences.

Incorporating culture within classroom assessment practices can help assessment become more accessible to students and, therefore, relevant because, to begin with, assessment orients instruction and learning (Biggs, 1996, 1998; Johnson & Kress, 2003). Secondly, were culture, or students' background, used to adapt assessments to render them more meaningful, the constructivist premise is that students would engage and invest more, thereby, improving their learning and, consequently, strengthening their assessment performance. Improved assessment performance, then, could result in an increase in self-efficacy. Increased self-efficacy, in turn, could spur increased motivation, challenge, effort and persistence or performance (Bandura, 1986).

Culture could manifest on assessments in topics that reflect student interests, ways of communicating knowledge (such as building a model on potential and kinetic energy versus writing a paper on it), setting up a testing environment, encouraging collaboration and other venues. With students gaining increased access to the assessment item and to communicating their own store of knowledge, they may be more likely to demonstrate their creativity and/or their ability to think critically, making inferences, deductions, or linkages between and/or among

given topics, such as, in problem solving or other applications. By applying their knowledge to novel situations, their learning may be extended and increased. In short, shaping assessment with culture may help to not only more adequately demonstrate students' learning, but also increase it.

Culture and Participants

Teachers' view of culture is germane to how they might accommodate it within their pedagogy. Therefore, teachers were asked to define both culture and student culture and they defined both in much the same way. Generally, participants demonstrated a familiarity with culture, their own as well as their students.' Participants' various definitions of culture, incidents related to their own culture, and depictions of classroom instruction situations illustrated they were sensitive to the concept of culture and to the role that student culture may play in learning. They primarily identified culture to possess the characteristics of family background, parental education, socio-economic status, family values and ethnicity.

These characteristics can be seen in participants' depictions of their own culture and the role that they view culture to play in the classroom. Participants often volunteered and easily discussed incidents related to their culture. For example, Cecilia mentioned her own background induced her to share personal information about herself with students and give motherly advice. Jocelyn said it motivated her to give *carinos*. Mijael admitted connecting with certain students immigrated from Mexico because of a perceived ethnic likeness. Lorna said she felt sympathetic to a youth who self-identified as Chicano, like herself. On the other hand, early in the interview, Philip drew a cultural contrast between himself and others in the state, being immigrated from another country and having lived previously in the Midwest. Similarly, when asked to define culture, he said before he could do so, he had to address the ethnic clash in the classroom.

However, in general, participants spoke overtly only about their own culture despite the research topic and questions on the topic. That was significant in terms of answering the research question because participants did not directly state that they incorporated "culture" per se in their classroom assessments. Several reasons may exist to explain this. They may have so internalized the idea of culture that they may not have specified it in their conversations. Accordingly, they may have incorporated it in their assessments in the same way. In other words, they may just do it without recognizing it as such. Plus, sometimes it may be difficult for them to distinguish the nature or the basis for the accommodation. For example, when Jocelyn modified a classroom assessment permitting a student to tell her the answer when he could not write it, she could have been modifying for culture if the student was new to the United States. Or she could have been modifying for a learning need if he could not write well. It may be that to the teacher, the nature of the need is neither easily identifiable nor as necessary as responding to the need itself. Therefore, it may not occur to these teachers to have considered the type of need before accommodating for it. They may just have recognize a need and, given the rigors and constraints associated with a particular test, done their best to address that need whatever it may be.

Searching participants' statements for references to culture found that although they did not voluntarily speak to "culture" per se, they did at times include the components they identified as comprising culture, such as, ethnicity or socio-economic status. They referenced them in connection with instruction and often seemed to associate culture with students' opportunity to learn - which may relate to socio-economic status. So, for these teachers, culture seemed to be more of a group variable than an individual one.

Concordant with teachers' perception of student needs were their responses to meet them. For example, Cecilia said she took her students on a field trip to the state capitol to learn about

the structures that Native American tribes built for homes and how they varied. She said she did so because students' "culture" did not provide them with the opportunity to learn about these native abodes even though they were located throughout the state. Marissa volunteered that she stipulated that students develop and complete their science fair projects in her class so that all students, regardless of background, would have the resources they needed to meet the assignment. Although related to opportunity to learn, Tim, on a non-economic note, railed against the state standards-based assessment for including what he perceived to be a culturally-related item – the tooth-fairy – on the recent March test. He protested that some students had neither the experience nor the classroom instruction by which to know about the tooth fairy.

Differentiating the concept of culture from that of "opportunity to learn" is neither always possible nor easy as these two constructs overlap. Opportunity to learn is defined as providing students with the instruction and resources they need in order to learn required content prior to an assessment (Linn, 2002) and arises from the court case of *Debra P. v. Turlington* (1981). Culture, as defined by the teacher sample, includes socioeconomic status. Having the resources by which to learn grade level content can be directly linked to a family's economic viability and ability to provide their child with academic-related materials. As in Tim's case, opportunity to learn related to both the students' in-class and out-of-class access to the culturally-related fairy tale -- the tooth fairy. Therefore, the two constructs may overlap and even be indistinguishable, but as made clear in Tim's example, they are not the same.

To summarize, these teachers did not state that they incorporated "culture" per se in their own classroom assessments, but that does not mean that their statements can be interpreted to say they do not. Participants described a role for culture in their own classroom instruction perceived largely as opportunity to learn. It is possible that participants may have so internalized the idea

of culture that it did not occur to them to mention it. It is also possible that teachers were careful to not stereotype culture associated with student needs.

Teachers' Reported Perceptions of How They Individualize Assessment

Although these teachers did not report either that, or how, they may have purposefully shaped their classroom assessments with "culture," participants consistently offered statements that reflected that they purposefully acted to support individual differences in their instruction *and* assessment. Precisely what they included within the concept of individual differences is not known, but it could have included features related to students' culture. The commitment and deliberateness with which they described student individuality renders it a significantly important dimension to recognize in their classroom practice. This study contributes to the literature on teacher classroom assessment perceptions (Stiggins, 2005b) by highlighting this.

Teachers revealed their intent to address student individuality in their narratives on teaching philosophies, classroom instruction, classroom assessment and modifications of standardized assessments. For these teachers to have responded to student differences amidst and despite a context of standards-based teaching regimented through scripted curricula and testing further attests to the strength of their intention to address perceived individual learner needs. Furthermore, some teachers reported that they had intervened on district and/or state standardized assessments on behalf of their students - even if contrary to protocol. Thus, some appeared zealous, indeed, in attending to individual student needs as perceived.

The teachers also related *how* they addressed students' individuality within their classroom assessment practices. The primary method they described to individualize assessment was choice in assessment response, either content or form. For example, Philip cited providing a reading assessment with specific questions and open-ended content and format response options.

Format options reportedly included writing a paper, working with another student who would present one student's work to the class, presenting a graphic, performing a skit or developing a recording. In addition to choice in selecting format options, some teachers related considering student differences through feedback carefully crafted to the individual. A few teachers indicated they reviewed students' self-assessments; one teacher said he decided on an individual basis whether to permit assessment retakes, even on what appeared to be district standardized tests. Other teachers said they examined each student's assessment results based on his own level of progress on standards-based learning goals and objectives.

Participants' apparently high level of commitment to addressing their students' individual differences is consistent with the work of Cobb and Bowers (1999) who said that it is the individual student's situation that matters. It also supports that of Cole and Zieky (2001) who said that fairness requires attention to students' individual differences.

While seeming to take much care to address students' individual needs, teachers' narratives suggested they may group various types of differences together under the heading of individuality. They may not have distinguished among learning, motivational, developmental, emotional and cultural needs or differences. According to Gay (2000, p. 23), students' individuality is "deeply entwined with their ethnic identity and cultural socialization," but she went on to clarify that individuality, culture and ethnicity are not the same.

The bases for these statements on individualizing assessment emanate from my review of transcriptions of teachers' recorded interviews. Examples of participants' reported assessments were not generally procured. Thus, evidence illustrating and documenting how these teachers actually operationalized individuality within assessment is not available. It would be beneficial to obtain samples of teachers' assessments to substantiate their reported assessment practices.

Formative Assessment

When these teachers discussed assessing on their own, they reported assessing in a manner that resembled formative assessment. Their statements reflected their firm intention to further student learning through assessment. That intention is the essence of formative assessment. Teachers also described efforts to encourage student autonomy and their use of practices associated with formative assessment per Black and Wiliam (2003). However, participants appeared unaware their own individualized classroom assessments may constitute true formative assessment; they believed formative assessment was scripted testing because, reportedly, that is what they were told. They said test and curriculum developers called the standardized tests included in teachers' scripted curricular packages "formative assessment." It appears that teachers' reports of scripted curricula with standardized tests would support Popham's (2006) contention that test developers develop large-scale standardized tests but call them "formative assessment."

True formative assessment is more of an approach to teaching and learning than it is a simple testing instrument. Formative assessment is an entire pedagogical design that functions to further learning (Webb & Jones, 2009) for *each* student. Results from a formative assessment illustrate a student's status and progress on the learning continuum. Then, assessment results are used to reorient the teacher's instruction to assist the student to the next learning goal. Because formative assessment uses the individual student's assessment results as the basis for further instruction, teachers can incorporate cultural and other student-related differences in their formative assessment practices. Formative assessment is an ever revolving and evolving process that attends to the individual learner.

The participants themselves suggested that the scripted tests they were required to use was not really formative assessment. They did not mention formative assessment embedded in the scripted curricula as a form they used when individualizing assessment. This implies that participants do not regard it as allowing for student differences which real formative assessment is designed to do.

Actual formative assessment is highly demanding on the teacher. It requires the teacher to modify the curriculum differently for students, engage students, give assessments, make appropriate inferences and, again, modify instruction and continue the process. That is what some of these teachers appeared to be doing on their own when they could. Generally, formative assessment takes time to learn, deliver and use effectively (Bennett, 2011). That these teachers said they did so in this context demonstrated a strong commitment to meaningful student learning. However, because formative assessment is such a demanding endeavor, to be really effective teaching with it, teachers, in general, need the support of their school administration. In this situation, in order to support meaningful learning, reportedly, a few school administrators were willing to say no to districts' required abeyance to a totally scripted curriculum. It seems unreasonable to expect that without administrative support under current circumstances, teachers could and would use formative assessment systematically. As Mark remarked, he would lose his job. Related research by McMillan, Cohen, Abrams, Cauley, Pannozzo, & Hearn (2010) found that secondary teachers made little use of formative assessment in guiding instruction. But that was one study and involved non-dual language teachers at a different level of schooling. Nothing is known about their level of commitment to addressing student differences. However, participants seem to have arrived at some key formative assessment principles, possibly as a result of their commitment to their students and their learning.

One of formative assessment's key features is its reliance on student autonomy, which these teachers said they attempted to incorporate within their assessment practices. One way that formative assessment supports student learning is by giving students more power over their own learning. That is why student autonomy is so important in formative assessment. When these teachers gave students a choice about what animal to select, which type of method to employ to present their knowledge of how atoms work, or even the liberty to select a response method on assessment the teacher did not pose as an option, these teachers were not only describing how they respected individual differences, they were also describing how they gave students the opportunity to make decisions and required them to be accountable for their own learning. That it was their intention to place responsibility, control and power in students' hands was explicitly expressed in their teaching philosophies. And, throughout the interviews, various teachers stated their intention to empower students through learning and to hold them accountable for that learning. By giving students the choice to select various assessment options, participating teachers believed themselves to be providing students with the opportunity for empowerment, decision-making and meaningful learning. But, as with culture and individualizing assessment, independent evidence of teachers' reported assessment formats is not available.

Some of these teachers appeared to employ classroom practices that encouraged students to engage in self-governance behaviors. Some students reportedly maintained their own assessment folders and, according to their teachers, take some level of responsibility for their learning. Students have, reportedly, enjoyed developing their own power points and presentations (Marissa, Cecilia, and Gustavo), or models of energy (Phillip), or dioramas on fish (Marissa), or assembling their own learning charts on heroes who have changed the world (Ashley). Without independent verification of just what teachers required students to do, the

level of student autonomy that teachers attested to facilitating cannot be ascertained. But, teachers' statements suggested that they were using "autonomy" as framed by Ryan and Deci (2006). They claimed - counter to Markus and Kitayama (1991) - that autonomy was self-governance and not independence.

Not only did these teachers intend that assessment results further student learning and seem focused on encouraging student learning responsibility, some teachers said they used the practices associated with formative assessment - feedback, questioning and self-assessment. These techniques help uncover and guide learning through its various stages, tailoring instruction as it goes. According to Cauley and McMillan (2010), student self-assessment and feedback are among the five key techniques they found that further student motivation and achievement.

Five of the teachers indicated that they carefully crafted written feedback to students taking care to balance positive statements with constructive ones. These teachers' described use of descriptive feedback supports the findings of Kluger and DeNisi (1996) who said that feedback may be useful, but how it is given and received is part of what determines its level of effectiveness. It is more effective when task- rather than person-oriented (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Brookhart, 2008). It also supports the more recent work of Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003) who said that to further learning, feedback should inform students about both their strengths and weaknesses. This study also adds to their work because descriptive feedback with both strengths and weaknesses was reportedly used by this sample of dual language teachers and with diverse students.

In summary, participants appeared to have intended that their own classroom assessments function like formative assessment. In addition, they reported using principles and/or practices associated with formative assessment. Thus, it appears they were either approaching formative

assessment in their classroom assessment practices or they were using some of the key features of formative assessment. Plus, that all 11 teachers in the sample said in some way and at some time that they accommodated student differences on their assessments attests to their support of learning by assessment as well as their commitment to their students' needs. This is especially the case because not all of them reported having administrative authority to design, implement and administer individually-oriented tests.

That teachers would reportedly implement highly individualized classroom assessment given today's intense large-scale testing environment is noteworthy. It demonstrates the power of teacher intention on instruction and assessment. And it illustrates the depth of their commitment to their students and their students' learning. However, the prevalence of a one-size-fits-all classroom teaching and testing approach may override any possible effect of culture and/or individuality that teachers may design into occasional student-oriented classroom assessments.

If teachers could be given license to incorporate culture and/or student individuality in their pedagogy, they would have the potential to deliver instruction that may be more meaningful for student learning (Gay, 2000). By teaching "to and through" students' personal and cultural strengths and characteristics, or culturally responsive teaching, teaching [and assessing] "filters" curriculum content and strategies so they become more meaningful for students and "easier to master," (Gay, 2000, p. 25). Similarly, Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond (2000) claimed it was important for language teachers to have a "clear understanding of themselves and their students as cultural beings" (p. 3) in order to teach them. "Failure to see the interconnectedness between first and second languages and cultures" is one of the problems adversely affecting the academic achievement of language learners (Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 2000). Additionally, in a discussion of the psychology of large-scale educational achievement testing, Ferrara (2006)

recommended understanding the role of language and culture; they both influence proficiency and test performance. While these teachers did not discuss integrating "culture" in their assessments per se or modifying them for language (except for large-scale standardized tests), they seemed directed toward addressing students' personal needs, strengths and characteristics. And their concept of student individuality may have incorporated culture. However, the literature suggested that a deliberate and focused approach to integrating culture within instruction would further student learning more than instruction without cultural attention and integration. The literature's support of a directed approach toward integrating culture within pedagogy gives rise to the question of the importance of explicit awareness on effective teaching practice. However, based upon what the teachers interviewed related, few opportunities existed for them to initiate and systematically maintain any curricular approach other than the sanctioned scripted one.

Teachers' Reported Perceptions of Large-scale Testing

Teachers sounded as deliberate in their described efforts to support learners' individual differences as they were vocal in their discontent with large-scale testing. The topic of large-scale testing inspired participant comments that were outspoken, direct, forthright and even emotional, especially about its effects as they perceived them. Their accounts indicated they perceived adverse testing effects in the curriculum, on students, and within standardized testing practices and, ultimately, those perceptions seemed to have permeated teachers' own consciousness and sense of command. Nevertheless, they reportedly managed to intervene and/or assess on behalf of students.

Overall, participants seemed distrustful of the entire testing process. This apparent distrust began with the White House and continued down to the school level. It included No Child Left Behind, which they often castigated for precipitating the perceived influx of

standardized tests with its accompanying perceived ill: the scripted curriculum. Together, they were conceived as leading to narrowing of the curriculum, and, therefore, students' opportunity to learn. As a result, combined with reportedly having to teach to the test, many teachers perceived dual language students as having to bear the consequence: being insufficiently taught and improperly assessed and placed. One teacher (who admitted to violating fidelity of the scripted curriculum) said her students do "well" on both the state and district standards-based assessments.

Generally, participants conceived large-scale standardized assessments to be structured in a manner that distinctly disadvantaged dual language students. They objected to the vocabulary on tests, the length of tests, the use of the computer, and what they perceived as culturally-related items on tests, but they especially objected to what they perceived as the lack of tests in Spanish. While noting certain national tests were only available in English, they credited the state standards-based assessment as being available in Spanish for some students. But, they particularly protested the perceived dearth of district tests in Spanish and portrayed district administrators as irresponsible and indifferent for allowing students to be assessed in a language in which they reportedly have not been instructed. They sounded angry about the possible effect this may have on students and called district tests "useless," representative of compliance and without benefit to student learning. Some teachers admitted to intervening on what sounded like standardized tests on behalf of their students, especially on vocabulary items. Some of these were, reportedly, district tests. It appears as though these teachers did have a solid understanding of the effect of language and ethnicity and, hence, culture on student performance as related to large-scale standardized assessments.

Not only did these teachers perceive large-scale tests to disadvantage students, they also conceived them as intrusive to "their" classrooms and seemed to feel that their instructional purview was curtailed. Participants appeared to feel constrained by large-scale standardized testing and combined with the requirement to teach using a scripted program, they also seemed to feel disempowered. They said they worked to attend to the individual student but their reflections denoted that they experienced their classrooms as adrift, not under their control. They seemed to feel pressured by district and state administrators to administer tests whenever told to do so. They sounded as if they felt cognitively and emotionally pressured to endure in an environment where they are told what, how and when to teach and assess. This is the context in which they taught students and endeavored to motivate them to reach for horizons beyond their reach -- to be "the next president" or Leonardo de Vinci. One wonders how they allowed for individual differences on assessment in a reportedly tightly structured environment not seemingly readily conducive to innovation or creativity and one in which they, themselves, seemed to have felt constrained. This study adds to the literature on teacher practice by disclosing, at least for this sample of dual language teachers, the impact that scripted teaching and testing combined with reportedly frequent district and state standards-based assessment can have for teachers. Additionally, a year after the interviews were completed, three teachers had left their teaching positions; one retired, one stopped out of teaching and one changed districts.

Despite feelings of constraint and disempowerment, many teachers revealed acting on what they deemed as their students' best interests. They said either they had independence to teach as they liked, or they took it - both in teaching and on assessments. Three of the 11 teachers asserted that their school administrators placed student learning above adherence to the district's curricula. Therefore, they maintained they did not have to observe strict fidelity to the

scripted program and had the right to teach what and how they conceived to be most meaningful for student learning. Yet some other teachers divulged they surreptitiously violated curricular fidelity in order to adapt both classroom and standardized assessments to benefit student learning, which they saw as more important. Hence, this study contributes to the literature on standardized assessment by revealing the impact of teacher conviction on fidelity and highlighting the implications of that impact on student standards-based assessment scores.

Some participants said they not only considered student learning to be more important than adhering to fidelity, but that they knew best what their students needed. They said they knew what their students knew because they were with them every day. While these teachers believed they were assisting their students, some also seemed to believe themselves to be overpowered and outnumbered. Only one admitted to "fighting from the belly of the beast," (Mark, p. 24). They seemed to view themselves in this pressurized unforgiving climate, continually demanding higher standards-based assessment scores amidst a context of scripted curricula and tightly-structured testing. With scripted instruction, pre-formatted tests and drop-in-tests at the drop of a hat perceived as central features of their daily life, most teachers did not claim to have the liberty to fully incorporate culture, or individuality, in their own classroom assessments. That they constructed and modified the classroom assessments to the extent they reported is, again, I believe a testament to their commitment to their students' learning.

The Context of Standardized Assessment

If learning does take place in the interaction between the learner and the teacher (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2004; Elwood, 2006), then it seems likely that some of the teachers' discomfort with their mandate to assess continuously - as they perceived it - on tests to which they objected would have been reflected in their interactions with students. In fact, the literature described the

effect of various elements, including context, on score performance especially for language learners. In reference to student-teacher interactions, La Marca (2006, p. 65) said, the "interpersonal context within which learning occurs and test scores are generated" can affect student performance on large-scale assessments.

Similarly, the literature pointed toward several different types of factors that converge on large-scale assessments to render score meanings and interpretations, or validity, suspect for language learners. Steele and Aronson (1998) reported that the appearance of an ethnic code on a test was enough for African American students to react to it and perform negatively as a consequence. La Marca (2006) contended that the NCLB legislation mandating increased testing discouraged recognizing personal factors that affect score variance. But, he continued, "we have strong evidence that these factors affect our interpretations of performance," (2006, p. 70). Abedi and Gandara (2006, p. 43) "know" that the context of second language learning has a "powerful" effect on motivation. Thus, even large-scale assessment researchers recognized the effect of context on assessment, large-scale or classroom.

Abedi and Gandara (2006) further claimed that the special needs of language learners were not considered in standardized assessments developed for "mainstream students." These teachers agreed and reported having taken steps to remedy what they perceived as unjust and unfair treatment of their students. Abedi and Gandara (2006) argued that language learners needed to be assessed with tests that would consider their specific needs. That would completely change the way that standardized assessments are constructed for language learners. Abedi and Gandara (2006) called for reducing the level of English language complexity while at the same time retaining the cognitive complexity of the construct being assessed -- just what some of these teachers said they did on both, or either, standardized and classroom assessment. The researchers

added it was unfair to expect language learners to attain the same level of achievement as other students in the same grade level because they have not mastered the language yet and part of their instructional class time has to be devoted to language learning. Thomas and Collier (2009) agreed with this. Hence, the literature reinforced the view that context affects content. The context of teachers' reactions to large-scale testing may have adversely affected students' standardized assessment scores.

Recommendations for Future Research

While some scholars such as Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008), Gay (2000), Banks (1994, 1988, 2004, & 2006) and Gonzalez and Darling-Hammond (2000) have studied how to make student learning more culturally relevant and a few, such as Sternberg (2007), have explored how students' culture can enhance assessment, examining how student culture and formative assessment affect learning outcomes has not received as much attention. Hence, this field is rich in opportunities for further research.

Correspondingly, while this study found that participant teachers said they individualized student assessment, independent evidence illustrating how they did so is lacking. Thus, one avenue for future study would be inquiring how teachers actually operationalize individuality on classroom assessment. As such, it may be beneficial to both (1) observe teachers in the classroom assessing student learning and (2) collect their teacher-constructed classroom assessments. The reported district mandate for these teachers to maintain fidelity toward scripted curricula may complicate accessing this information, as some teachers may be reluctant to reveal personalizing practices. Consequently, a year of participant observation would be desirable for the length of the study. Ideally, observing for an extended period of time would negate any possible participant action to assess in a particular way just because they are participants in a

study. In addition, accessing a wider sample of dual language teachers for a larger number of districts would help strengthen the robustness of the study.

Similarly, research comparing the performance scores of students assessed on individualized assessments with performance scores of students assessed on scripted tests from the embedded curricula may demonstrate which form of assessment better serves student learning. Again, a wider sample of teachers from a larger number of districts for a period of a year would help to strengthen the study and its findings.

In addition, five of the 11 teachers reported using descriptive feedback in the vein of that recommended, for example, by Hattie and Temperley (2007), Brookhart (2008), and Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003). To document how teachers actually do give feedback, copies of their written feedback would be needed. Therefore, a study examining how a sample of dual language teachers actually give verbal and written feedback to their students would demonstrate their reported methods. Furthermore, it would be more illustrative of how effective dual language teachers are with feedback if examples of students' receipt of feedback and follow-up steps were also examined.

Conclusion

In summary, the findings revealed that these teachers did not report how they shaped classroom assessments for student culture. However, teachers did seem mindful of culture, generally. They seemed attuned to culture both as related to themselves and as related to their students', especially, their opportunity to learn in the classroom and their performance on standardized assessments. In that vein, some teachers appeared vigilant and, even, warrior-like in their readiness to defend and redress perceived wrongs to students on standardized assessments.

Teachers did report modifying their classroom assessments for student individuality – as they perceived individuality to be. And they did describe how they provided for student individual differences within their classroom assessments. However, it is not clear just what that individuality encompasses. Regardless, these teachers appeared focused and committed to accommodating it even at the cost of acting counter to their district and school administrative directives. Their commitment to their students’ individual needs in assessment seems to have brought them to approximate implementing formative assessment. While not evidentially demonstrated, it is likely that student individuality includes student culture as well as developmental, social, emotional and learning needs. I believe that when integrated with their pedagogy and classroom assessments, student culture can become a springboard to help students better engage, learn and perform. Ultimately and optimistically, together, student culture and classroom assessment have the potential to help students succeed, academically and personally.

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Appendix A

My Background

My personal background helps to shape my outlook on student culture and classroom assessment practices. The literature on classroom assessment and culture also contributes to my perspective.

Five years ago, selecting culture and classroom assessment as my topic for this work seemed very natural for me. Mine was always a culturally-rich world. I grew up in a household of contrasting cultures. My mother came from a background that valued the arts. She was a concert pianist and an eternal student of the arts. She taught me by age 3 to read and play the piano; music and literature were constants in our home. In contrast, my father was a child of the streets. He ran away at the age of 9 from an orphanage, raised himself and put himself through college and graduate school. My father's world was more earthy and basic than my mother's. From him, I learned to love the earth and that which is of it as well as take care of others. From my mother, I learned about beauty, music and social graces. I did not know when I was young that they came from two different cultures, I only recognized their "worlds" as different.

My parents were both school teachers. My brother and I often accompanied my dad as he went into homes to try to persuade parents, often migrant workers, to have their children come to school. I was struck by the power of what they had in the home. While different than ours, it was rich and strong and loving. I took away from that experience recognition of the value of the home and how important it was in one's life. I came to know that the home a person was born into made a lot of difference as to where one began in life. I did not know at that age that "what one had in one's home" was culture. From those many visits, I gained a deep and appreciation for culture, which continues.

One day when I was home from boarding school and my brother was about to go off to medical school, my father told us to "Never forget where you came from." I understood my father to mean that he wanted us to never forget who we really are no matter where we are, to remember our roots, and to always take care of other people. Those words were memorable to me.

Growing up in Texas as a child in those days, it was my desire to be part of the country's diplomatic corps. It was a childhood dream that became reality. I loved power politics, which was the politics of the two superpowers at the time, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR and today Russia), and the United States. So, I studied Russian and political science, gaining first an undergraduate degree and, eventually, a graduate degree in political science. When the U.S. State Department came calling one day at University of Chicago (UC), I answered the call. The Federal Bureau of Investigation investigates all potentially accepted Foreign Service applicants for possible security risks; the investigation typically takes about two years.

While at Columbia University, I was accepted into the U.S. State Department Foreign Service. I never finished the program in International Relations at Columbia, but as a UC exchange scholar, I interned at the United Nations Secretary General's office, Western European Desk, and studied at the Harriman Institute. I left for training at Langley, Virginia, and then was posted to the American Embassy, Moscow.

The world of diplomacy was demanding, exciting, highly intriguing, dangerous, compelling and everything I had imagined it to be. I loved it! Eventually, my father's words came back to me. In 1996, I left Moscow and the Foreign Service, returned to Chicago and began to search for a different profession. I selected educational psychology. I could commit myself to

helping people learn. It is that commitment that fuels my passion to help students build upon the culture they have to strengthen their learning, to express their talent, and to, hopefully, help them become more academically and personally successful.

I have been asked how I was "able to get the teachers to open up to me" as they shared their concerns and bare emotions during the interviews for this study; some even implicated themselves. Perhaps, my background in communications - I had been a print journalist and have a master's in journalism - and my interest in people and their worlds (or cultures) helped teachers feel comfortable to express themselves and contributed to my interviews with the teachers. Mostly, I just listened deeply. I considered it the highest compliment when at least two different teachers told me I had to have been a classroom teacher at one time. I have not. I cannot help but be touched by many of their stories, not all of which could be presented in this dissertation due to space, nor could all be expressed due to confidentiality. Some confidences were off-the-record and I honored those. I empathize with teachers and their concerns. I acknowledge my regard for them and that directly and indirectly, undoubtedly, knowingly and unknowingly enters into my dissertation.

As for my interest in classroom assessment, it is more recent. I became interested in classroom assessment at the University of New Mexico Educational Psychology Program, where I met Dr. Jay Parkes. From Dr. Parkes and the research literature to which he introduced me, I learned about the potential power of classroom assessment to orient instruction and student learning. That assessment would orient teacher instruction and, therefore, student learning, I found fascinating as well as useful. What an optimal way, I thought, to engage students - use classroom assessment!

The literature supports the role of classroom assessment in learning. Classroom assessment has been scientifically demonstrated (e.g., Crooks, 1988) to bear on student learning. Shepard (2000) urged using classroom assessment to better reflect the learning needs of the discipline, motivate students and inform instruction. She suggested that expanding the form of classroom assessment could play a role in how it is used. Stiggins (2005b) asserted that classroom assessment has been neglected in favor of standardized assessment and that we, in the measurement community, have contributed to that. He said, we have been both critical and complacent regarding classroom teachers' training regarding classroom assessment. We have criticized teachers' training but not taken the time to understand *their* assessment needs. The time has come, he declared, to provide the training they need to become masterful in assessment which begins with understanding *their* assessment context. Rather than continuing to beat our chests about how much we measurement experts have contributed to the quality and primacy of standardized assessment, it is time, he declared, to direct our attention to serving teachers in *their* world. He offered various assessment-oriented initiatives as to how the measurement community can begin to assist teachers with learning and mastering classroom assessment that would enhance their pedagogy and student learning.

It is my hope that, in addition, to answering my research question and furthering the formative assessment research panorama, this study contributes to Stiggins' initiative by helping to illustrate participants' assessment context. Teachers' stories demonstrate their struggle - yes struggle - to provide the best classroom assessment for their students - approaching, perhaps, formative assessment. They do so, seemingly, without their knowing what true formative assessment really is. Scripted assessment, be clear, is standardized assessment on a classroom level; unfortunately, teachers are told it is formative assessment. Teachers persist in shaping

assessment for students, they said, despite administrative directive to maintain fidelity to the prescribed curriculum, because they believe it is in the best interests of their students. Their assessment and instructional practices could be that much more powerful if teachers were informed of and allowed to practice true formative assessment.

I, myself, was drawn to formative assessment, specifically, because it has been empirically demonstrated (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b) to facilitate learning for the individual student. Based on constructivism, I conceived that carefully crafted formative assessment could target that which is meaningful for students (taken from their background or culture) to engage them more deeply and combine that with their learning targets to lead them to construct their knowledge in a way that would be relevant for them. Thus, was the topic for my dissertation research chosen, placing me squarely front and center as a participant in the process.

Appendix B

Synopsis

This report presents the findings of my research on Student Culture and Classroom Assessment Practices. I sought to learn whether dual language teachers - deemed most likely to hold a consciousness of student culture when assessing student learning - consciously shaped their classroom assessments in order to accommodate students' culture, and if so, how? To that end, 11 primarily fourth and fifth grade teachers from three school districts were interviewed. Essentially, teachers indicated they consciously allowed for individual differences as they could within classroom assessments.

More specifically, five main topics emerged from these interviews: teachers, standardized assessments, schools' classroom assessment philosophies, classroom assessment and culture. A synopsis follows in this order. "Teacher" reflects teachers' pedagogical philosophies. Themes addressed include 1) altruistic goals, such as, every student has the right to learn; 2) the teaching of content and skills; 3) student learning; 4) learning accountability; 5) motivation; 6) teacher expectations; 7) teacher caring; 8) a safe classroom; 9) respect for students; 10) an environment for success; 11) the value of knowing one's students; and 12) pragmatism. Within discussion of their philosophies, five teachers referred directly and/or indirectly to the individual, but no teacher mentioned culture explicitly. Six teachers identified culturally-related features: ethnicity, socioeconomic level, and student background.

"Standardized Assessment" developed as a result of comments by three to seven teachers. At times with emotion, some teachers asserted that standardized assessments and standards-based teaching disadvantage the dual language student and curriculum. Teachers perceived the standards-based curriculum to hamper dual language students and program by: one, having less

instructional time available due to increased time administering mandated standards-based assessments. Two, requirements for more instructional time on assessment-related subjects are perceived to narrow the content of the curriculum and, thereby, diminish the education of dual language students. Three, as a result of administrative pressure teachers said they feel compelled to teach to the test. Therefore, even less time is available for instruction because teachers spend part of that time teaching test-taking skills. In addition, teachers maintained that dual language students are required, at times, to take assessments: 1) on uninstructed content and 2) in a language in which they have not been instructed, reportedly on district, state and national tests. Consequently, some teachers feel compelled to act on behalf of students through practices, such as, translating vocabulary words and granting additional time, which may violate assessment fidelity.

Asked to describe their "Schools' Classroom Assessment Philosophies," teachers revealed that a few schools include consideration of individuality and/or student culture in their schools' classroom assessment philosophies. More specifically, teachers identified perceived 1) official classroom assessment philosophies, such as, assessment is related to learning, and assessment needs to consider student needs and background; 2) un-official classroom assessment philosophies, such as, each teacher assesses differently; and 3) practice-driven responses, such as, data drives instruction.

In "Classroom Assessment," teachers offered philosophies that included the beliefs that classroom assessments should be individualized and that the purpose of classroom assessment is to inform instruction. In terms of practice, eight teachers appeared to give both scripted and non-scripted classroom assessments. Teachers' statements indicated that they consciously support individual learners in classroom assessment through, generally, 1) how they think about

assessments; 2) selected assessment formats, such as open-ended questions and performance assessment; 3) feedback; 4) self-assessment; 5) interpretation of assessment results; and 6) assessment retakes.

As teachers' conception of culture would be germane to how they may accommodate culture on assessment, they were asked to define culture. "Culture" includes definitions of culture and student culture, which seemed to overlap. For one, the traditional definition of culture identifies values and ethnicity, while the student culture definition references ethnicity and students reflecting their parents' culture, which may be equated with values. Teachers also identified culture as individual and related to student behavior and identity. When discussing student culture, a factor that surfaced within ethnicity was a perceived culture clash between New Mexican Hispanic and Mexican immigrant students. This factor may spill over onto some teachers, demonstrating, at times, in different perceived parental attitudes toward education and teachers. Teachers, generally, revealed an awareness of non-curricular cultural influences that may affect learning in the classroom: students' socioeconomic status, the role of parents, school parental programs, ethnicity and technology. Culture appears as a group variable.

Asked how classroom assessment, learning, culture and student differences come together, seven teachers indicated awareness and accommodation of individual differences when assessing. Of the seven, five appeared to allow for individual learning needs consistently as possible; one indicated he does so as he can due to the stipulation for fidelity towards scripted curricula; and one teacher revealed that she does so secretly because of administrative direction to assess all students in the same manner. Of two teachers who indicated that culture was associated with assessment, one perceived culture in terms of economic resources related to opportunity to learn and the other related culture to ethnicity and lifestyle, or background. But

neither indicated adapting an assessment because of culture. Plus, two teachers said they did not adapt assessment for student culture.

To conclude, it appears that although teachers are aware of cultural factors, they purposefully structure their assessments to account for individual differences and learning, which they do largely by providing a level of choice in assessments. And attending to individual differences appears, generally, of major significance to teachers. It is within a student's individuality that culture, as well as learning needs, states of development, interests and preferences demonstrate.

Appendix C

Demographic Form

Classroom Assessment Study

The purpose of this study is to learn how teachers experience student culture in their classroom assessment practices. Any individually identifying information will not be entered into the electronic file. This is done to insure confidentiality of your responses. The first part of this sheet asks you to provide preliminary information for our study. Please place a check in the appropriate blank or enter the information requested. The second part presents questions which may be asked during the interview.

1. Name: _____.
2. Age: 20-29 _____; 30-39 _____; 40-49 _____; 50-59 _____; 60 and above _____.
3. Gender: male ____; female ____.
4. Number of years of teaching dual language: _____.
5. Number of years of teaching dual language at your current school: _____.
6. Grade level you currently teach: _____.
7. Name of your current school and school district:
_____.
8. Total years of elementary school teaching experience: _____.

Appendix D

Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Tilia Giron from the Educational Psychology Program in the College of Education at the University of New Mexico. Tilia Giron is a doctoral student in the Educational psychology program and is conducting this research study in partial fulfillment of her doctoral program. Your participation in this research will contribute toward the improved understanding of teachers' experience with student culture and classroom assessment practices as well as toward her ability to partially fulfill her degree requirements.

You were selected as a possible participant in the study because you are a dual language teacher and one of the objectives for dual language teachers is development of cross-cultural skills among students.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: To learn what dual language teachers experience in relation to incorporating student culture within the practices associated with classroom assessment. It is anticipated that learning about this experience will inform both a research design for further study of culture and classroom assessment practices as well as contribute to the day-to-day practices, processes and procedures of teachers as they work to further learning among students from various cultures in their classrooms: in instruction and on assessments.

PROCEDURES:

1. Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary.
2. Your participation consists of your participating in an informal interview that is interested in learning what you experience and the conditions under which you experience the aspects of students' culture in relation to classroom assessments. The interview is estimated to take approximately one hour and twenty minutes.
3. In addition, you may be asked to return for a separate interview that is anticipated to be about an hour in length. The purpose of this interview is to verify the study's findings with participants.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

1. Participating in the interview will take approximately one hour and twenty minutes of your time.
2. Little anxiety is anticipated beyond that associated with participating in an informal discussion.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY:

1. The potential benefit to you if you choose to participate will be that you will have contributed to the study of student culture and classroom assessment. It is hoped that ultimately the study findings may further student learning.

2. The potential benefit to Educational Psychology and the field of Education is to add to the knowledge base of how classroom teachers consider student culture within their assessment practices.
3. The potential benefit to Tilia Giron is to enable her to potentially meet partial fulfillment of her doctoral program, in particular that related to her dissertation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential. You will have the opportunity to receive a statement of the research findings if you wish when the study findings have been ascertained. Once the interview information has been entered and coded, and approved by you for accuracy, all information that could potentially identify you will be destroyed. There will be no way of identifying any single participants' responses.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:

You may choose whether to participate in this study or not. If you volunteer to participate, you may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of any potential benefits to which you may be entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCHER AND REVIEW BOARD:

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to speak with Tilia Giron, Simpson Hall, College of Education, 277-4535 or by email at tilia@unm.edu. If you have any other concerns, you may also contact the University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board at Scholes Hall, Room 255, Albuquerque, NM 87131, (505) 277-2257.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT:

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant (please write)

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR:

In my judgment, the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

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