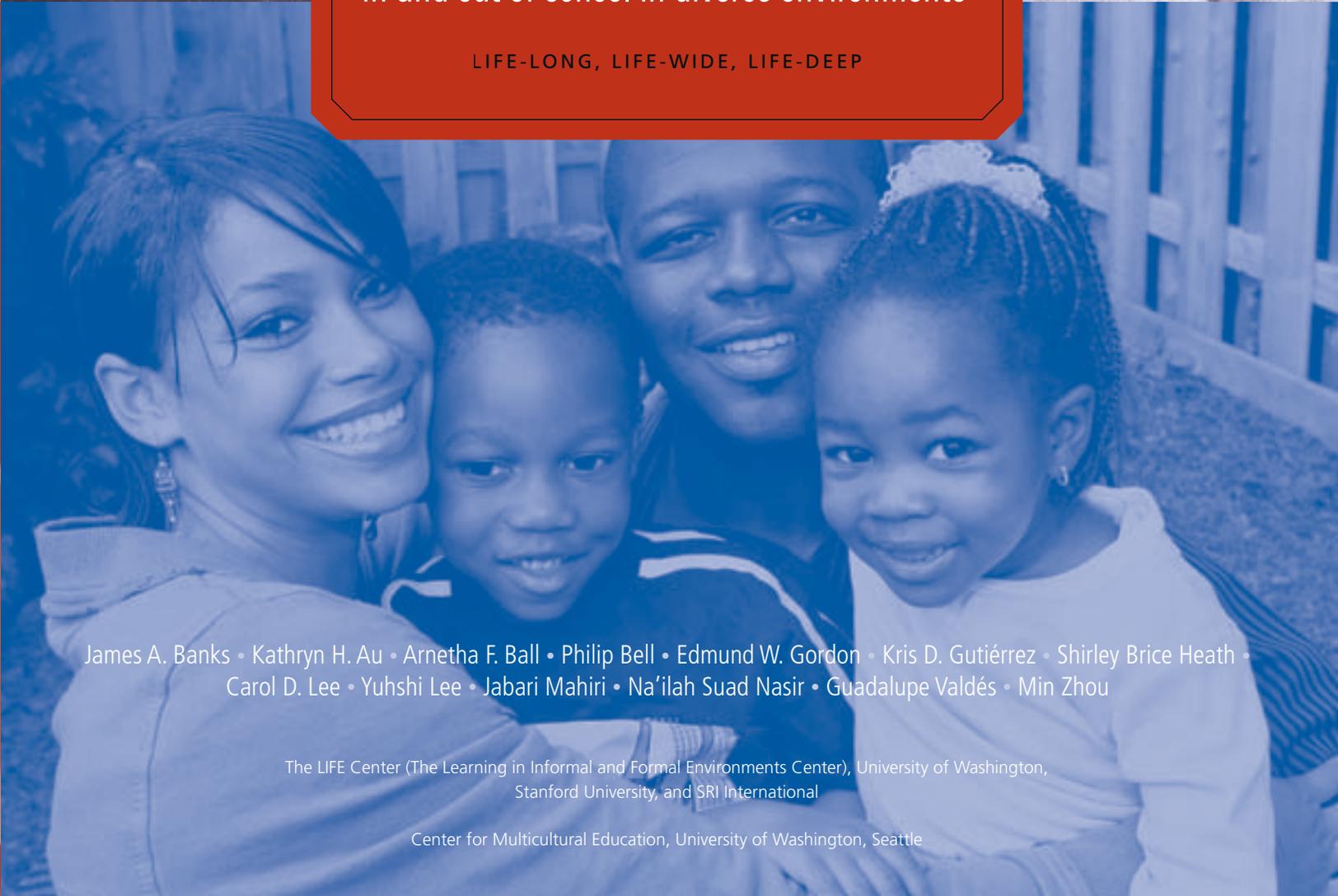


# Learning

in and out of school in diverse environments

LIFE-LONG, LIFE-WIDE, LIFE-DEEP



James A. Banks • Kathryn H. Au • Arnetta F. Ball • Philip Bell • Edmund W. Gordon • Kris D. Gutiérrez • Shirley Brice Heath • Carol D. Lee • Yuhshi Lee • Jabari Mahiri • Na'ilah Suad Nasir • Guadalupe Valdés • Min Zhou

The LIFE Center (The Learning in Informal and Formal Environments Center), University of Washington, Stanford University, and SRI International

Center for Multicultural Education, University of Washington, Seattle

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## The LIFE Center

AN NSF-FUNDED SCIENCE OF LEARNING CENTER

The Learning in Informal and Formal Environments (LIFE) Center  
A collaboration involving the University of Washington,  
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### The Authors

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington and the LIFE Center—a research collaboration between the University of Washington, Stanford University, and SRI International, supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF)—established the LIFE Diversity Consensus Panel. The Panel’s goal was to develop a set of principles that educational practitioners, policy makers, and future researchers could use to understand and build upon the learning that occurs in the homes and community cultures of students from diverse groups. A major assumption of this report is that if educators make use of the informal learning that occurs in the homes and communities of students, the achievement gap between marginalized students and mainstream students can be reduced.

This report consists of four major parts. Part 1, the Introduction, describes the educational implications of significant changes related to demographics and globalization that are occurring in the U.S. and around the world. Part 2 explicates life-long, life-wide, and life-deep learning and states why these concepts should guide learning inside and outside of schools and other educational institutions. Part 3, which constitutes the main part of this report, focuses on the four principles listed below. Part 4 provides conclusions and recommendations. This report also contains a checklist that educational practitioners can use as a tool to generate dialogue about the four principles identified by the LIFE Diversity Consensus Panel.

## PRINCIPLES

1. Learning is situated in broad socio-economic and historical contexts and is mediated by local cultural practices and perspectives.
2. Learning takes place not only in school but also in the multiple contexts and valued practices of everyday lives across the life span.
3. All learners need multiple sources of support from a variety of institutions to promote their personal and intellectual development.
4. Learning is facilitated when learners are encouraged to use their home and community language resources as a basis for expanding their linguistic repertoires.



PART I:  
Introduction

The changes around the world caused by globalization and worldwide immigration are significantly influencing education in the U.S. and in other nations. Students educated in Western nations such as the U.S., the U.K., Canada, Australia, and France must compete for jobs with people educated in nations such as India, China, and Pakistan. Technology enables companies to outsource jobs from wealthy Western nations to poorer Asian nations where labor is considerably cheaper (Friedman, 2005). If you have recently made a reservation on a major U.S. airline, the individual who booked your flight may have been in New Delhi, India. A book written by one of the authors of this publication was developed in London, copyedited and typeset in Chennai, India, and printed and bound in Great Britain.

Globalization moves jobs, people, products, and ideas across nations. Although nationalism is strong and national borders are as tight as ever, globalization challenges national borders because of its influence on trade, technology, jobs, and the rights of people who participate in global population movements (Banks et al., 2005). Individuals who live in nations that are members of the European Union, for example, have certain rights that all European nations must recognize. Similarly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights codifies human rights that should be extended to all people in the world, regardless of the nation in which they live (Osler, 2005).

Globalization and worldwide immigration have also increased the racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity in U.S. schools and in schools around the world. The U.S. has been diverse since its founding. When Europeans arrived in America, Native American groups spoke a variety of languages and had rich and diverse cultures. The arrival of Europeans and Africans from many different nations and cultures further enriched racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity in America. When the Mexican-American War ended in 1848, the U.S. annexed territory in the Southwest under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Consequently, many people of Hispanic and indigenous background were added to the U.S. population. Immigration peaked in the U.S. near the beginning of the 20th century. Today, the U.S. is experiencing its largest influx of immigrants since the early 20th century.

Globalization, global job competition, and the digital world in which students are socialized make it imperative for educators to rethink the conventional aims and means of education for all students, including those from majority and minority groups. Theoretical and empirical evidence indicates that there is a significant lag between education in the public schools and the digital technology and culture in which students today are deeply involved (Mahiri, 2004). The schools are not keeping up with the digital age in which students live and participate.

Schools in the United States and around the world face challenges and opportunities when trying to respond to the problems wrought by increasing diversity and international migration in ways consistent with their democratic ideologies and declarations. There is a wide gap between the democratic ideals in Western nations such as the United States and the daily educational experiences of non-mainstream groups in their schools. Non-mainstream students in the U.S. as well as in Western European nations such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands often experience discrimination and marginalization in school and society because of their cultural, language, and behavioral differences (Banks, 2004; Luchtenberg, 2004).

The rich diversity of U.S. schools presents challenges to which educators need to respond and opportunities that they should actualize. The academic achievement gap between ethnic minority and majority group students is one of the most complex and intractable problems faced by schools both in the U.S. and around the world; it defies facile analyses and responses (Banks & Banks, 2004; Luchtenberg, 2004). Ladson-Billings (2006) uses “education debt” to highlight the structural inequality in U.S. schools and society and to shift the stigmatizing and negative focus from low-income and minority students.

Diversity also provides rich opportunities to create learning environments in which instruction is enriched, the academic achievement of marginalized students is enhanced, and the education of all students is improved. As Bowen and Bok (1998) insightfully point out, a good education requires education about diversity in a diverse environment.

Schools should prepare students from all racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups to become effective and reflective citizens of the national civic culture and community (Banks, 2007). This goal should be attained in ways that are consistent with the idealized values of U.S. society, which include *civic equality*, *recognition* (Gutmann, 2004), and *cultural democracy* (Ramírez & Castañeda, 1974). If we honor these values, then we must help students from diverse groups to become effective citizens of the U.S. and the world without alienating them from their home cultures or violating their cultural and language identities (Wong Fillmore, 2005).

Rather than alienate students from their home and community cultures and languages, teachers should build upon the cultures and languages of students from diverse groups in order to enhance their learning (Moll & González, 2004). An overarching tenet of this publication is that teachers can increase the academic

achievement of students from diverse groups if they make use of, and build upon, the knowledge, skills, and languages these students acquire in the informal learning environments of their homes and communities (Moll & González, 2004).

### The Life Diversity Census Panel

The Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington and the LIFE Center—a research collaboration between the University of Washington, Stanford University, and SRI International, supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF)—established the LIFE Diversity Consensus Panel during the 2004-2005 academic year. In its leadership role for the LIFE Center, the LIFE Diversity Consensus Panel focuses on ways in which learning in informal settings can enhance the academic achievement of students from diverse ethnic and racial groups, and of students who speak a first language other than English. This report describes the findings and conclusions of deliberations that have been ongoing for two years.

Principles related to the ways in which the learning that students from diverse groups acquire in informal settings in their homes and communities can be used by schoolteachers and other educators to increase student academic achievement and to make school a more inviting place make up most of this publication. The wide gap in the academic achievement between most ethnic, racial, and language minority students and White mainstream students is a major problem within U.S. schools and society writ large. Our hope is that the principles we identify and describe in this publication will enable teachers, other practicing educators, and future researchers to increase the academic achievement of all students by identifying, drawing upon, and creatively using the cultural and linguistic capital students bring to school from their homes and communities.

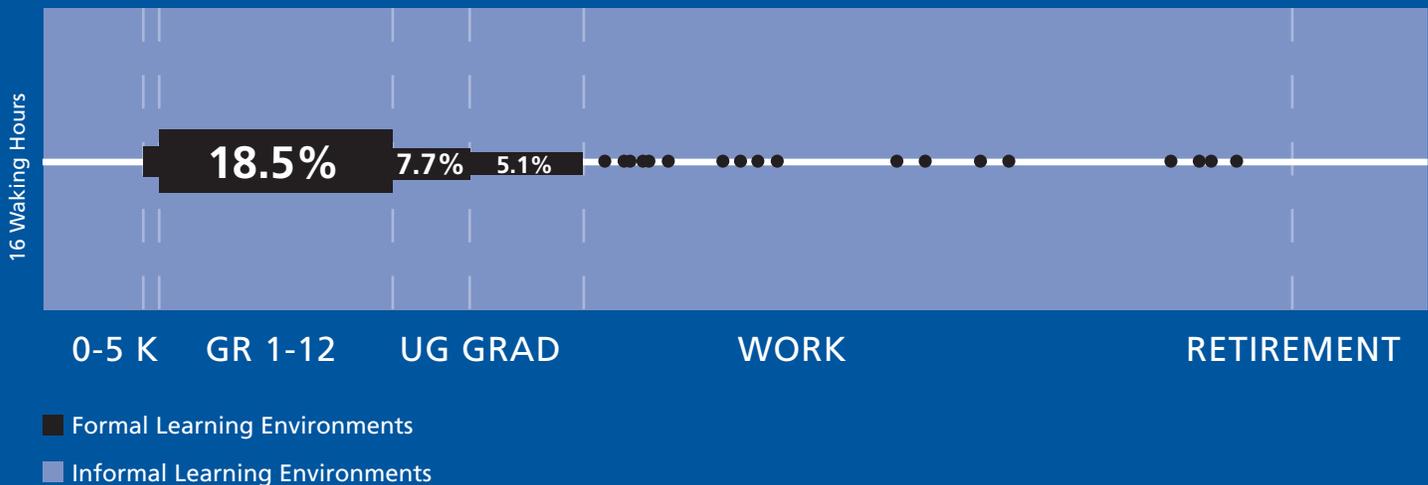
## Learning in Formal and Informal Environments

Most of the learning that occurs across the life span takes places in informal environments. A major purpose of the LIFE Center is to unlock the mysteries and powers of human learning as it occurs in formal and informal settings from infancy to adulthood. Figure 1 compares the approximate amount of time people spend in informal learning environments with the time they spend in formal environments. LIFE uses this diagram as a beginning point for exploring a variety of issues such as informal learning in formal environments and

vice versa, clearer definitions of their similarities and differences, the relative importance of different kinds of learning environments as people mature, and ways in which new technologies are affecting the boundaries between settings.

Figure 1 makes clear that people spend the majority of their time from infancy to adulthood in informal learning settings. We view this diagram as an initial map of the life-long and life-wide territories of human learning, and as a resource for conversations about the scope and span of human learning.

Figure 1 Life-long and life-wide learning





PART 2:

DIVERSITY AND LIFE-LONG,  
LIFE-WIDE,  
AND LIFE-DEEP LEARNING

Most readers of this report will recognize in the phrase “life-long, life-wide, and life-deep” something familiar about their own learning. This phrase will remind readers that by acquiring many different kinds of knowledge and skills, they have succeeded in their own learning, experienced setbacks, and decided occasionally to step aside from one or another challenge. We hope readers will revisit what they have gained through their travels along the various paths of learning that have brought them to where they are now, and consider how they might help make such learning possible for today’s young learners.

Many of today’s learners come from social ecologies in which cultural, ethnic, or economic factors differ from those of most educators in fundamental ways. Refugee status, immigration history, economic standing, and geographic mobility of these young learners may not match the key factors that marked the childhood, youth, vocational preparation, or vocational preferences of many of the adults in their schools. Yet these young learners bring with their racial, ethnic, and regional identities a host of strengths related to adaptive skills, identity confidence, extended family support, and experiential bases. All of these strengths enable these learners to contribute in numerous ways to the learning environments in which they study, learn, and develop. New ways of looking and thinking about the stretch, depth, and breadth of life-long learning is vital for young learners, who will be the citizens who sustain democracy in their organizations, communities, the U.S., and the world.

Because educators are expected to help bring about a better-educated work force, they have to prepare the young to keep on learning—in their jobs, families, and civic responsibilities. The average worker will change jobs nine times or more before age 32 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2003). Preparing future workers who bring technological expertise to their jobs and who can keep upgrading and expanding what they know will require far more than intensive instruction within classrooms.

What it takes to be a well-informed, good citizen has changed drastically in the past two decades, along with vast alterations in the fundamental relationships of business, technology, and government. Every society that wants thoughtful citizens—local, national, and international—recognizes the need to expand ways to create new knowledge and technologies. Even more important is the vital need to reconcile these informational and technological changes with enduring values related to ethics, religion, social relationships, and the responsibilities of government. Such expansion calls on educators to draw from what they know about the wide array of highly adaptive learning, especially reflected in the core experiential knowledge and wisdom that comes with racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity.

Preparing students to be productive workers is only one important goal of schools in democratic pluralistic societies. Schools should also prepare students to become effective citizens. Effective citizens in democratic multicultural societies have the knowledge and skills needed to live in a complex and diverse world, to participate in deliberation with other groups, and to take action to create a more just and caring world.

## What Is Learning That Is Life-Long, Life-Wide, and Life-Deep?

**Life-long learning** refers to the acquisition of fundamental behaviors (e.g., walking and recognizing faces) and real-world information (e.g., objects fall when dropped, steeper inclines require more exertion than gradual ones). Learning that extends from our childhood into old age includes all the ways we manage interpersonal sociability, reflect our belief systems, and orient to new experiences. Most of the time, such learning is intuited, “picked up,” and unconscious.

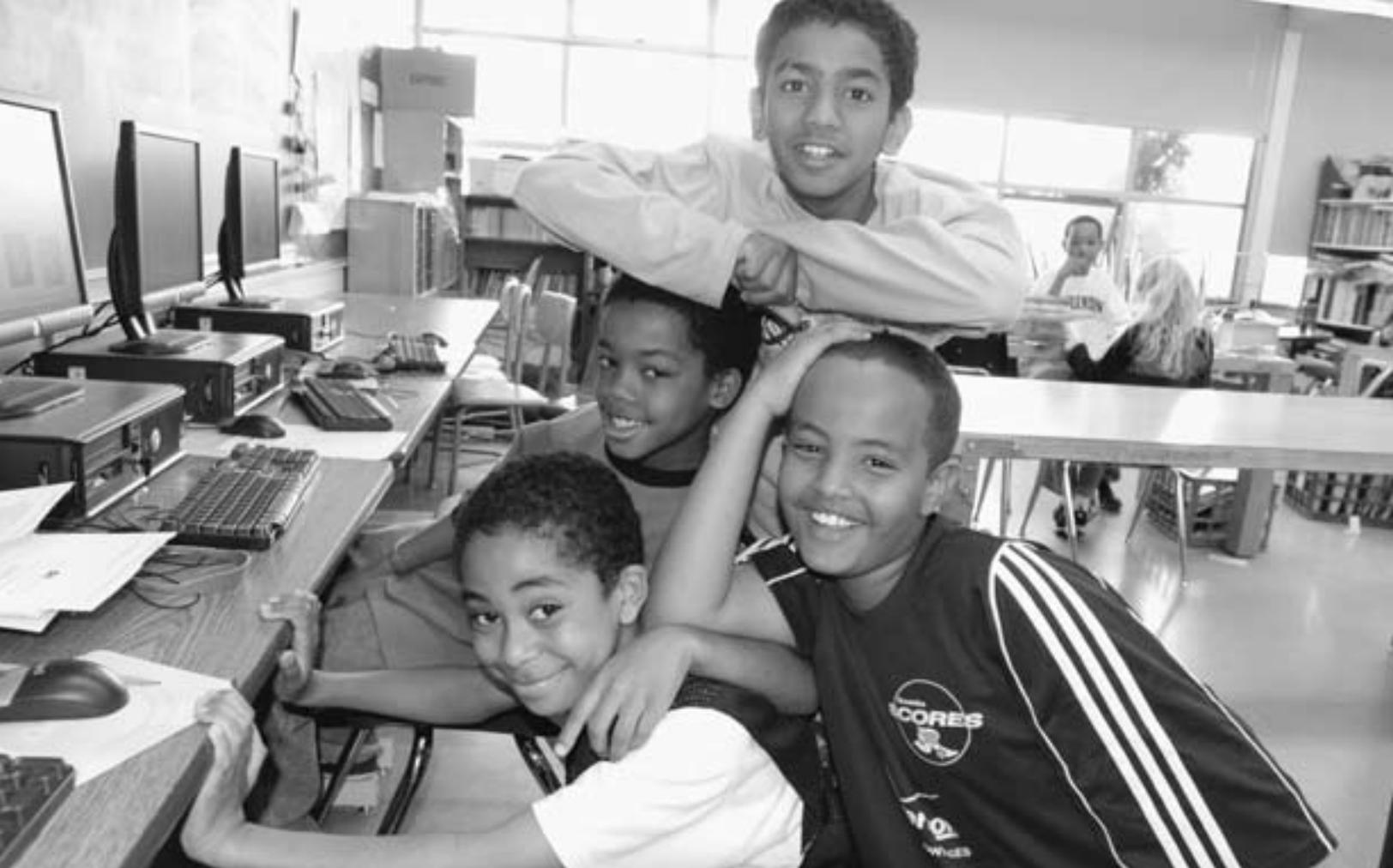
Life-long learning may conjure up specific kinds of information that relate primarily to career choices and the practical needs of daily living. As learners have gained all these sorts of information, they have also developed particular skills on which effective and satisfying performance depends. Generally, learners prefer to seek out information and acquire ways of doing things because they are motivated to do so by their interests, curiosity, pleasure, and sense that they have talents to support a move toward certain kinds of tasks and challenges. Whether learning to play the banjo, build wooden boats, or whip up a perfect chocolate cake, learners take in information and techniques through observing, trying, testing, and finding satisfaction. Orientation toward these efforts begins in infancy and continues into old age.

**Life-wide learning** involves a breadth of experiences, guides, and locations and includes core issues such as adversity, comfort, and support in our lives. It takes in everything from knowing as a seven year old how to say no to chocolate cake at a friend’s birthday party without explaining your allergy to learning how to predict traffic patterns on a busy freeway. It tells an individual where an open parking space might be in a crowded town center and helps her figure out how to regroup if her

wallet is stolen during a vacation in an unfamiliar city. This learning carries individuals through adaptation to new situations, ranging from unfamiliar terms and instructions on tax forms to relocation from one apartment complex to another.

Negotiating human relationships, health maintenance, household budget management, and employment changes reminds learners that the wider the reach of their sets of skills, the better life runs. An individual needs only to face a plumbing problem during a holiday, misunderstand the fine print of an insurance policy, or puzzle over an unexpected credit rating to see the need for broad general know-how. If individuals cannot take care of these issues themselves, they at least want to know how to find someone they can trust either to do these tasks for them or to help them learn how to do them.

**Life-deep learning** embraces religious, moral, ethical, and social values that guide what people believe, how they act, and how they judge themselves and others. Fundamental in such learning is language. The symbol-making and processing capacity of humans is one of the most remarkable of human traits, underlying what they think and do and many of the ways they learn. People have to learn how to use all that comes with the gift of language in their roles: as child, parent, religious instructor or mentor, tenant, neighbor, employee, and public citizen. Each of these roles requires more than a single way of talking or a single medium of presentation.



### LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Language and interactional strategies that determine orientations toward engaging one's body and mind in learning. This learning begins in our earliest experiences of play, physical activity, and opportunities to plan and carry out ideas and work projects alone and with others. This learning shapes our foundation for curiosity, eagerness, communication, and persistence in continuing to learn and to keep on learning.

### LIFE-WIDE LEARNING

Experience in management of ourselves and others, of time and space, and of unexpected circumstances, turns of events, and crises. This learning brings skill and attitudinal frames for adaptation. Here we figure out how to adapt, to transport knowledge and skills gained in one situation to another, and to transform direct experience into strategies and tactics for future use.

### LIFE-DEEP LEARNING

Beliefs, values, ideologies, and orientations to life. Life-deep learning scaffolds all our ways of approaching challenges and undergoing change. Religious, moral, ethical, and social learning bring life-deep learning that enables us to guide our actions, judge ourselves and others, and express to ourselves and others how we feel and what we believe.



PART 3:

# PRINCIPLES

To facilitate life-long, life-wide, and life-deep learning for students from diverse groups, educators should draw upon the cultural capital these students bring to school from their homes and communities. In our deliberations and discussions, we identified four principles related to learning in informal and formal environments that teachers and other educational practitioners can use to enhance the academic learning of students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, cultural, and language groups and to increase educational equality for all students.

We based these principles on research, wisdom of practice, and our work with schools and teachers over several decades. The combined experience of the members of the LIFE Diversity Consensus Panel includes decades of classroom teaching, research, classroom observations, and everyday living. We first present the list of four principles and then discuss each one in turn:

- 1. Learning is situated in broad socio-economic and historical contexts and is mediated by local cultural practices and perspectives.**
- 2. Learning takes place not only in school but also in the multiple contexts and valued practices of everyday lives across the life span.**
- 3. All learners need multiple sources of support from a variety of institutions to promote their personal and intellectual development.**
- 4. Learning is facilitated when learners are encouraged to use their home and community language resources as a basis for expanding their linguistic repertoires.**

**1. Learning is situated in broad socio-economic and historical contexts and is mediated by local cultural practices and perspectives.**

Social class, race, ethnicity, national origin, and gender have significant influences on opportunities to learn and develop in U.S. society. Being born into a racial majority group with high levels of economic and social resources—or into a group that has historically been marginalized with low levels of economic and social resources—results in very different lived experiences that include unequal learning opportunities, challenges, and potential risks to learning and development. Although

the levels of economic and social resources are critical to the kinds of experiences students have and the challenges they face, structural inequalities are not deterministic. Structural inequalities are mediated in important ways by local cultural and community practices and in families.

All students face risks—to be human is to be at risk. Educators need to be aware of the kinds of risks that learners encounter in their everyday lives, the accumulation of risks that learners face across different settings, and the resources that exist in local practices that allow students to effectively negotiate potential challenges (Spencer, 2006). The unequal distribution of a multitude of resources—including housing, jobs, health care, and education—creates serious risk conditions for many young people. Historically, middle-class White suburban communities have usually had resourceful neighbors, safe streets, high-performing schools, and other community infrastructures conducive to education and upward social mobility. In contrast, many low-income and racial and ethnic minority communities are plagued by poverty, social isolation, and a paucity of infrastructures to support education and well-being (Anderson, 1999; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Lawrence Aber, 1997; Ferguson, 2002; Ferguson & Dickens, 1999; Massey & Denton, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Wilson, 1978, 1987, 1996).

Differential access to adequate schooling is a significant way in which inequalities related to race and class are manifested (Gamoran, 2000; Haberman, 1991, Knapp, 1995). Most U.S. students have to negotiate schools that are ill-equipped to prepare them to engage meaningfully in the emerging global and technological society. Too often, schools fail to connect with students

as social, moral, and cultural beings (Nasir, 2004). Urban schools—especially those that serve low-income students or students from historically marginalized groups—often fail to offer students basic learning resources (Shannon & Bylsma, 2002). Many inner-city schools have deteriorating and poorly maintained buildings, limited play spaces, inadequate books, less-qualified teachers, few AP courses, and stigmatizing tracking practices (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Oakes, 2004). In mixed-race schools, minority and immigrant students are often disproportionately tracked into low-ability, low-performing classes (Kozol, 2005; Oakes, Joseph, & Muir, 2004; Olsen, 1997). Consequently, the learning process of students in these communities can become disrupted in schools. Students sometimes encounter very difficult educational environments that making learning difficult.

Challenges created by inequalities can be exacerbated by racism and discrimination. Group stereotypes can have a powerful effect on student identities and learning opportunities. Steele's (1997) research indicates that when negative stereotypes about stigmatized groups are evoked in testing situations, members of these groups underperform on academic tasks. Stereotype threat has an immediate effect on the specific situation that evokes it as well as a cumulative erosive effect over time that influences both intellectual performance and identity (Steele, 1997).

Even seemingly positive stereotypes can have negative effects on learning and personal growth. Lee (1996) describes how the model minority stereotype negatively influences Asian Americans. It causes them to feel isolated and depressed, to experience shame when they seek help with learning difficulties, to become suicidal, and to have low self-esteem. An array of psychological and behavioral distress has caused long-term psychological damage to many young Asian Americans, damage that extends beyond high school (Lee, 1996).

Cultural communities and families have a wide array of resources to draw upon when they negotiate risky environments. Communities and families have developed rich cultural traditions, created mechanisms and practices for coping and adapting, and developed important meaning-making and identity resources. Even in inner-city neighborhoods, the majority of families

describe themselves and their neighbors as strong, loving, and decent (Anderson, 1999). Cultural communities constitute one of the most central contexts that shape human learning (Boykin, 1982; Boykin & Bailey, 2000; Heath, 1982, 2004; Scribner & Cole, 1973).

Cultural communities are diverse, fluid, changing, and manifested differently in various contexts as they shape the perspectives of learners. Cultural identities—based on class, race, ethnicity, national origin, and gender— influence how people connect and respond to what it means to be a member of their cultural communities. As the salience of a particular identity shifts in a particular context, the learner's connection to the setting, access to participation, and the meaning of behavior change. Youths often consciously try to construct an identity that is consistent with how others view them, as in social mirroring (C. Suárez-Orozco, M. Suárez-Orozco, & Doucet, 2004). In some situations and contexts, youth construct an oppositional identity to resist inferior educational institutions and to seek alternative means for empowerment (Carter, 2005; Conchas, 2006; Fordham, 1995; Ogbu, 2003). In other situations and environments, youth meet the high expectations of their families and communities.

Resistance as a form of coping can take multiple forms. One form is constituted by a sense of optimism and a belief in a better future. Another is a sense of pessimism and a lack of faith in the existing social system (C. Suárez-Orozco, 2004). In the latter situation, school achievement can be seen as unlikely to lead to upward social mobility (Fordham, 1995; Matute-Bianchi, 1991; Ogbu, 2003). Reduced opportunities for social mobility create frustration and pessimism for all young people, but these emotions and beliefs are most strongly felt by those trapped on the lower rungs of the social ladder (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997). However, it is not only low-income and minority students who behave in ways that are viewed as resistant or oppositional. Some middle-class suburban youths also experiment with drugs, dress and act like street gangsters, and adapt inner-city youth cultural forms. These youth are unlikely to be perceived as "bad kids" or to be penalized by negative stereotypes because they are cushioned by wide and strong safety nets that their parents provide. They also are more likely to finish high school and attend college than youth who live in central cities (Lareau, 2003; Zhou, 1997).

Because learning is life-deep, youth grow and develop through constant interactions with their families, the communities that surround them, and larger societal institutions such as schools. Cultural community structures serve as spaces for engaging in cognitive activities (Nasir, 2002; Zhou & Kim, 2006). Students often actively acquire and develop language skills, learning and thinking abilities, confidence in themselves, and life aspirations and goals through their daily encounters with other people and other social forces as they advance in life. Learning is also life-wide, extending from immediate and close-up fundamental needs to navigating a wide spectrum of highly varying contexts through life.

## 2. Learning takes place not only in school but also in the multiple contexts and valued practices of everyday lives across the life span.

Youth do not learn just in school. The multiple contexts and valued practices of everyday life across the life span are vibrant, continuous spaces for learning. These contexts include family settings, community settings, neighborhood and neighborhood-based organizational settings, church and other religious settings, work settings, sports and other recreational settings, music in its range of venues, gangs and street activities, and the digitally mediated settings of the media and popular culture.

Transitional learning and the learner's identity are interdependent and change over time. One example involves the digitally mediated settings of the media and popular culture. Particularly in the last 30 years, learning in the digitally mediated context has been characterized by experiences of intense novelty, diversity, and transience. These dynamic contexts of the last three decades reflect two intersecting and cross-fertilizing forces—digital mediation of texts and the globalization of textual influences.

Curriculum content and the characteristics of learners are intricately tied to fluid repertoires of practice of learners who might be seen as “digital natives” in the age of hip-hop. Life-long, life-wide, and life-deep learning is reflected through new literacy practices enabled by multi-modal texts and cultural resources, which contemporary

youth engage in and draw upon for meaning making, cultural identity, a sense of power, and personal pleasure.

Overall, new forms of meaning-making tied to new forms of technology offer possibilities for novel forms of learning. Contemporary youth are utilizing technological resources to sample, cut and paste, and re-mix multimedia texts for replay in new configurations, just as hip-hop DJs reconfigure images, words, and sounds to play anew. Essentially, the emergence of new media enables novel forms of learning for contemporary young people, and ultimately all people.

Learning for youth that is life-long, life-wide, and life-deep is occurring in semiotic domains that are increasingly linked to interactive, web-compatible, digital technologies like cell phones, iPods, video games, audio and video recording and playback devices, as well as computers. The challenges of developing healthy human beings are tied to expanding our notions of life-long learning and literacy to more fully understand what is of the greatest value in these new learning contexts.

One implication of the increasingly pervasive digital mediation of life-long learning is that formal schooling will need to radically change to be effective for many youth. Future generations will no doubt find technology a core aspect of their daily existence. Teachers need significantly more professional development to close the divide between adults who are more like tourists in digital worlds and youth under 30 who function as digital natives. More and more, the ability to engage young people in purposeful experiences that are meaningfully connected to the worlds outside of school will require increasing levels of technology in schools. As the need for technology in schools and communities continues to increase, styles of teaching will need to accommodate more independent, project-based, and problem-solving learning experiences. New pedagogies will need to incorporate radically different kinds of assessments that can account for changing roles and responsibilities among young people and their communities and that also take into account their life-long learning in multiple semiotic domains.

### 3. All learners need multiple sources of support from a variety of institutions to promote their personal and intellectual development.

In popular, political, and academic discourse, learning is all too frequently equated with schooling. This widespread conflation privileges the consideration of formal academic outcomes while obscuring the central role of a broad range of everyday capacities and social outcomes now recognized to be associated with a more holistic view of youth development and preparation for life. While academic achievement is essential for the success of most individuals, educational efforts writ large—including those associated with formal schooling, after-school programs, community youth programs, and informal learning opportunities—need to help youth develop across many dimensions. Youth need to acquire forms of social capital that will positively shape their long-term development and learning. They need to be supported in setting life goals and in acquiring social and emotional competencies that will serve them across their life pursuits. They also need the foundational support associated with personal health and well-being.

It is especially noteworthy that youth learning and development are frequently presumed to be the result of individual effort and accomplishment, rather than the product of communities, groups, and families. Traditional accounts of learning and cognitive development have tended to study phenomena in a single social setting—whether in the real world or the lab. A growing body of research on everyday cognition and cultural development has documented how people learn across social settings, activities, and life pursuits (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Hutchins, 1995; Rogoff, 2003; Scribner, 1985). Theoretical and empirical accounts highlight the coordinated, distributed, and interactive nature of learning and development that occurs within communities, groups, and families. What is all too commonly framed as individual accomplishment is better understood as the result of the coordination and strategic use of learning resources (Cole, 1996).

Communities vary in terms of the local resources they can routinely and easily provide to youth and the degree of coordination that takes place across educational institutions. Parents—whether they are affluent or low-income—need to navigate the available ecology of resources and use them to support the learning and development of their children (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999).

Communities strongly influence youth learning and development. Programs, resources, and incentives can enable a community to identify productive configurations of resources and programs that fulfill locally identified needs (Eccles & Appleton Gootman, 2002). Models can be pursued that allow for overlapping and reinforcing educational experiences for youth in a variety of learning environments. These coordinated learning experiences should support the multiple developmental needs of youth in a coherent and personalized way.

Compelling models of coordinated developmental support within a community share a range of characteristics. First, they follow a community-centered, grassroots process to identify pressing issues and to develop coordinated plans. This involves engaging the community in a participatory process for identifying local needs and creating local configurations of programs and resources that support the holistic development of youth. Second, local configurations involve overlapping and redundant learning experiences and developmental supports. Given the wide individual variation frequently associated with learning, such redundancies of experience and scaffolding help a greater number of youth learn.

There are many positive effects that derive from coordinated developmental support within a community. In such situations, youth can receive multiple forms of mentoring while learning about a range of perspectives. They can expand their social network and develop other forms of social capital. They can develop interests and capacities that will serve them in the future. Coordination and overlapping of programs and resources can promote the development of the community.

The holistic well-being, development, and learning of youth is accomplished within and by communities that continually invest in the active coordination and use of these enabling structures. There is great variation in the configuration of such structures, which is expected, although the range of models is not infinite. Local progress can be promoted by a comprehensive elaboration and application of proven models.

Schools alone are not sufficient to enable the optimal academic and personal development of youth (Comer, 1997). Additional educative resources must be made available to children if their optimal development is to occur. Schools are only one of the nation's education institutions (Cremin, 1988). Education also occurs at home, in faith-based institutions, on farms, in the streets, at museums and libraries, and on athletic courts or fields. Many parents selectively choose from these and other sources to ensure that their children are well educated.

Communities and even nations—in addition to families—have important roles to play to support learning and teaching that occur outside of schools. More equitable access to health, human, political, and social capital and to adequately funded institutions of human learning and development—such as families, homes, schools, hospitals, cultural and recreational facilities—may be the most fundamental supplement to formal schooling. Research indicates that such access—often as determined by socio-economic status (SES)—is a strong predictor of academic achievement (Miller, 1995). It may not be SES per se that is important but the experiences that are often associated with SES. Despite inequalities in status and access to education-relevant forms of capital, students tend to perform better in school when there are supports for academic and personal development in their homes and communities (Comer, 1997; Gordon & Bridglall, 2005).



Schools have the primary responsibility for providing formal teaching and learning experiences in academic content and skills related to the cognitive and affective development of youth. Families and communities have primary responsibility for the physical, personal, social, and emotional development of youth and the active support of their academic and personal development in a context that is trustworthy. In such a division of labor, schools provide *formal education* while families and communities provide *supplementary education*.

We define *supplementary education* as the formal and informal learning and developmental enrichment opportunities that are provided for students outside of school and beyond the regular school day or year (Gordon & Bridglall, 2005). Some of these activities may occur inside the school building but are beyond those experiences that are included in the formal curriculum of the school. Boy and girl scouting, 4-H clubs, and religious schools were for many years the most common forms of supplementary education. Some families have used mealtime to engage their children in discussions about current events, their activities at school, family values, personal relationships, and allocation of family responsibilities (Rogoff, 2003).

Prior to the industrial revolution, children in rural areas had critical responsibilities for helping with farming and animal husbandry. As a result of such work and related discussions, children acquired attitudes, knowledge, and skills that served them well in school and in life. The corporate sector promoted the sale of model airplanes, cars, ships, and trains; board games such as checkers, Monopoly, and Scrabble; bicycles, dolls, doll houses, and athletic equipment. All of these commercial products were used to impart knowledge, skills, and values to children.

Recently, we have seen the advent of organized recreation, electronic games, custodial services, after-school programs, arts/crafts/music clubs, field trips, study groups, and tutorial services. Many of these activities were designed to keep children busy and off the streets, but they are also a rich source of supplementary education experiences that have not been equally available to advantaged and less advantaged children. Evidence increasingly suggests that these differences are associated with achievement disparities.

Supplementary education involves more than the extra services that must be paid for. In fact, its most important feature may be the active concern with and participation in the process by significant others—parents, parent surrogates, peers, and interested adults. We believe that education that is well supported—including good schooling and rich supplementary education—is a fundamental right to which all children are entitled.

#### 4. Learning is facilitated when learners are encouraged to use their home and community language resources as the basis for expanding their linguistic repertoires.

We start with the premise that all learners have language resources to draw upon. In fact, both children and adults have and use linguistic repertoires that include different languages, codes, registers, and styles. Most individuals can draw upon ways of speaking within their linguistic repertoires (including several codes and combinations of these codes) as appropriate to meet the demands of different communication tasks (Gumperz, 1972). They use various styles and levels of language both flexibly and dynamically and continue to acquire additional ways of speaking throughout their lives, making language learning and use a life-long process.

Individuals cannot develop or learn to draw on their linguistic repertoires without intensive meaningful practice, preferably in emotionally supportive environments. Children begin to acquire rules for speaking and interacting appropriately in their home environments from the time that they are born. Infants, toddlers, and young children learn most of their early language through interactions with family members and close friends or paid daycare providers. Verbal language comes along with food, loving care, and familiar surroundings.

Being talked to is not at all the same as being talked with. For language learning, it is the *with*—being engaged in conversation—that counts (Heath, 1983). Many kinds of interactions can support language learning and broadening of students' linguistic repertoires, but all demand joint attention of adult and child or youth, as well as shared engagement and interest.

As language learners grow beyond childhood, they interact in school and family life, to be sure, but they also spend time outside both settings. Often those in middle childhood and adolescence seek out situations that give them positive learning opportunities with supportive adults. Sports, drama, choir, dance, and community service offer the same kinds of opportunities for investigation that children seek in interactions in their earlier years: What is the problem? What do we want to happen? How can we make this happen in our work together?

When children arrive at school, they have already mastered effective ways of communicating with members of their family and community. They have been socialized by their family on what to say, what not to say, and when to say what to whom. As children grow up, their choices of one language or another—as well as style, form, and accompanying supports (digital, musical, gestural)—come through their socialization in roles such as students, employees, and citizens, as well as family members. In this sense, language learning and use are life-wide. As we learn language, we also develop enormous bodies of knowledge and an intuitive understanding about how to communicate in different situations, with various listeners and for multiple identities and purposes, making language learning and use life-deep. For example, a professor in a Midwestern university may choose not to use his family's South Boston dialect when lecturing, but during office hours in casual conversations with students, the location of his early childhood is evident. Being able to call upon a broad linguistic repertoire increases an individual's success in every situation—whether at home, in school, in the workplace, or in the community.

For young children, language learning takes place in home and community settings. However, once children enter school, their learning may be stymied if they are not allowed to use their existing language resources or if they are treated as though they lack language resources. Two issues should be highlighted as central to ensuring success in school: the choice of linguistic code and an emphasis on communicative intent versus form.

Because all learning—in formal and informal settings—is mediated through language, the choice of the linguistic code used in classrooms is profoundly important. In the 1974 *Lau* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the right of Cantonese-speaking students to be taught in their home language. The *Lau* decision made it abundantly clear that these learners were in essence being denied access to education because instruction was being conducted in a language they did not understand. In the 1979 *King* decision, the U.S. Circuit Court ruled against the Ann Arbor school district, concluding that students who spoke African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as their first language suffered an educational disadvantage. This disadvantage came about because teachers had a negative attitude toward AAVE, did not recognize it as a legitimate language, and did not use knowledge of AAVE to inform the way they taught students to read. In short, U.S. courts have recognized the importance of the home language in students' education, in terms of giving students equal educational opportunities.

When they arrive at school, children must then learn appropriate ways of speaking in an academic setting. The exception might be the few whose families use language in ways similar to those common in school. In general, children have to become conscious of the fact that, in informal settings, we tend to focus more on the *communicative intent* (the message the speaker is trying to convey) than on the *code* (the form of language the speaker is using). In formal settings such as the classroom, the reverse is true. In these settings, we tend to worry more about form—the code, switching between codes, and details of grammar and pronunciation. It matters whether children use the right vocabulary and pronunciation, whether they avoid colloquial usages, and whether they can use the right level of language to explain, discuss, defend their opinions, and otherwise communicate what they have learned. While form is important, an overemphasis on form can have a negative effect on learning. A fear of being criticized for errors in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary can easily make students hesitant about participating, taking risks, and experimenting with language in the classroom.

However, when teachers focus on communicative intent rather than form, students can make positive educational gains. Studies suggest that a focus on communicative intent in classroom settings, including flexibility about the codes students are allowed to use, may promote academic growth. Moll and Diaz (1987) had Spanish-speaking students read a text in English but discuss the meaning of the text in Spanish. These students showed much better reading comprehension than when they were required to discuss the text in English alone. Similarly, students who speak Hawaii Creole English—a non-mainstream variety of English—as their first language develop well as writers when their teachers allow them to confer with peers in Hawaii Creole English and then rephrase their ideas in Standard English (Rynkofs, 1993).

In short, evidence suggests that students learn more when they are allowed and encouraged to use the variety of language resources available to them. Nevertheless, teachers who have been given little instruction on the ways that language varies often have little understanding of the relationship between power and language. This lack of understanding, in turn, leads to restrictions being placed on students' language use. Students may be forbidden to speak their primary language in the classroom or be corrected whenever they use non-mainstream grammar or pronunciation. Every society has a culture of power, and students must learn the languages or codes of the culture of power to advance to higher education, to obtain good jobs, and to experience social-class mobility (Delpit, 1988). While it is vitally important for students to become proficient in the languages of power (in the U.S., varieties of standard American English), the question is how this goal might best be accomplished. This question is particularly critical in the case of students who are being raised outside the culture of power and who are likely to be proficient in languages and codes other than those of the languages of power.

A key issue is the attitude we maintain while seeking an answer to this question: specifically, whether we see speaking other languages as a problem or an asset. If we view speaking other languages as an asset, then the solution is to allow students to learn the languages of power, academic content, and other knowledge, strategies, and skills through the variety of language resources available to them (that is, through their existing linguistic repertoires). The mindset here is that learners are encouraged to use their language resources flexibly across settings. However, if speaking other languages is viewed as a problem, then students who are not already proficient in the languages of power are at a continued disadvantage. Certain codes are always identified as the high prestige versions, and the burden falls on speakers of the lower prestige codes to make accommodations, even as their own existing linguistic repertoires are being devalued.

The relationship between language and identity is a complex one. In order for children to draw from the variety of language resources available to them and to grow in their ability to expand their linguistic repertoires, they must feel safe and valued. They must know that schooling will not require them to give up their identities, their loyalties, and the ways of speaking and communicating that they value (Beykont, 2002; Wong Fillmore, 2005). They will understand that just as they dress differently to participate in various activities, they will also use different language styles and registers to carry out a variety of actions such as displaying competence, flattering others, arguing, courting, persuading, and buying and selling goods.





PART 4:

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this report, we have presented a rationale for the development of schools that prepare students for life-long learning that is life-wide and life-deep. In our technological and interdependent world (Friedman, 2005), productive workers and successful citizens must continue to learn throughout their lives. We have also described the racial, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity within the United States and around the world, and the challenges and opportunities that diversity presents to schools and to nations. We presented and explicated four principles that will help educators to transform diversity into an asset by using the cultural and linguistic capital that students bring from their homes and communities to teach the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to be effective citizens in the United States and the world.

In presenting our recommendations for improving and sustaining educational access, opportunity, and participation for non-mainstream youth, we encourage all stakeholders to adopt a broad and nuanced vision when making policy and curricular decisions (Gutiérrez, 2004). Much educational policy and practice has been designed to address the needs of an undifferentiated group of students—such as low-income students, English Language Learners, and African American students—without consideration of the vast variability in the needs, experiences, and available resources for the members of these groups. We use the term “broad and nuanced vision” to emphasize that, while it is important to first seek to understand the educational situation of the target population as a whole, a second important and often ignored step is to then consider the local needs of particular communities and students. We believe that this more complex view of the varied needs and strengths of communities will help eliminate the tendency to develop one-size-fits-all approaches to the schooling of non-mainstream youth. The following recommendations are informed by our wish for complexity as educators, policy makers, and researchers consider new views of the role of culture and learning. These recommendations are keyed to the four principles described in this report.

#### PRINCIPLE 1

**Learning is situated in broad socio-economic and historical contexts and is mediated by local cultural practices and perspectives.**

- A cultural approach to learning recognizes the range of experiences and knowledge that students accumulate across the routines of their everyday lives. In this approach, we view student learning that occurs in homes, communities, and schools as tightly interconnected and interactive.
- Policy makers should support the development and sustainability of collaborative problem-solving learning environments for students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups.
- Across all learning environments, learning is enhanced when the everyday lives and valued practices of students are used in instruction.
- Policy makers should recognize and take action to reduce the structural forces, inequities, and constraints learners experience, such as racism, relative access to health services, and low socio-economic status.
- Learning is facilitated when the cultural, socio-economic, and historical contexts of learners are recognized, respected, and responded to.

- Researchers and educators should recognize that cultural structures or themes are important parts of the lives of students and are manifested through the daily interactions between children and adults in their families and communities. These cultural community structures serve as spaces for engaging youth in cognitive activities.
- Educators and researchers should acknowledge and examine their own biases about cultural, racial, ethnic, and other social differences that exist in various communities. They should also reflect on their beliefs about racial and ethnic minorities and their cultural communities to ensure that their responses to youth are not based on stereotypical knowledge.
- Researchers and educators should make a concerted effort to understand how immigrant students must negotiate several cultural worlds in order to fulfill their roles at home, in the community, and at school.

#### PRINCIPLE 2

Learning takes place not only in school but also in the multiple contexts and valued practices of everyday lives across the life span.

- Educators need to recognize that youth are learners who have perspectives and experiences that constitute valid knowledge bases and resources for formal educational experiences.
- Teachers need to diversify pedagogical approaches in ways that integrate new media, technologies, and the range of students' experiences and knowledge to enrich student learning.
- Educators should understand and attend to the vast array of textual media learners engage in and draw upon them as educational resources.

#### PRINCIPLE 3

All learners need multiple sources of support from a variety of institutions to promote their personal and intellectual development.

- Educators need to recognize that holistic youth well-being, development, and learning are accomplished within and by communities.
- Programs, resources, and incentives should be put in place that allow a community to identify productive configurations of resources and programs that support and fulfill locally identified needs.
- Allocation and coordination of programs, resources, and incentives between and across communities and schools are essential to overcome inequities in economic, political, and social capital or various forms of education-relevant capital.
- Strong collaboration between learners, their families, educational practitioners, policy makers, and educational researchers will strengthen the perspectives and knowledge bases of all stakeholders and of education writ large.

#### PRINCIPLE 4

Learning is facilitated when learners are encouraged to use their home and community language resources as a basis for expanding their linguistic repertoires.

- Policy makers, parents, and other stakeholders should view speaking another language as an asset, not as a liability.
- Learners should be encouraged to use their language resources flexibly across settings.
- Educators need to acknowledge the language of power and to examine their biases regarding what counts as linguistic comprehension.
- All students should be provided with the opportunity, instruction, and resources to become bilingual.
- Educators should reconsider many of the common recommendations often given for the development of supports that scaffold academic and personal

development in the homes of students and in schools. Such recommendations are often provided without consideration of the social and economic structures that constrain everyday life for members of non-dominant communities.

- Policy makers should ensure that classroom and community libraries are rich with books, reading and study materials, and on-line computer access that are easily available to parents and students in English and home languages.
- Intergenerational mentoring and tutoring programs should be established that involve community members, business constituencies, and senior citizens from the community as resources for parents and families.

- Accessible and affordable health maintenance and nutrition programs should be integrated into schooling and learning environments.
- The vocabulary, language, and literacy development of bilingual students should be assessed with appropriate measures.
- Teachers should encourage students to use the variety of language resources available to them and build on the language experiences and resources students bring to school from their homes and communities.
- When researchers study learning and cognition they need to consider the development of children who routinely use two or more languages in their daily lives.



Instead of asking families to provide places for their children to study, read, and do academic work—with adequate and protected time for such work—educators should recognize that families may have limited space and time or resources to support learning in the idealized ways often cited. Instead, educators should encourage families to develop family routines and structures that use the available resources of the family and community to support learning. Families have resources and the desire to support children’s learning. However, the daily scripts they develop around learning may not reflect the normative views often ascribed to middle-class families.

One Spanish-speaking mother, for example—drawing on her own schooling experiences in Mexico and her children’s bilingual schooling in Texas—developed a daily family routine that required her children to sit around the kitchen table to do their homework. In organizing this routine, the mother helped to ensure that her children had assistance readily available: the older children could help their younger siblings with homework (Gutiérrez & Arzubaga, in press). Educators need to recognize and encourage such local and innovative routines that are both valued and productive in individual homes and communities.

## LEARNING IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL IN DIVERSE ENVIRONMENTS CHECKLIST

This checklist is designed as a tool for educators to generate dialogue about the principles discussed in this report. The checklist provides educators a springboard for discussion and reflection.

Principles	Rating				
	Hardly at All		Somewhat		Strongly
<b>1.0 Are the educators in your institution aware that learning is situated in broad socio-economic and historical contexts and is mediated by local cultural practices and perspectives?</b>					
1.1 Are the educators in your institution aware of the accumulation of risks that learners encounter in their everyday lives?					
1.2 Are the educators in your institution aware of the resources and constraints that exist in local practices that allow learners to effectively negotiate potential challenges?					
1.3 Do the educators in your institution connect with students as social, moral, and cultural beings?					
1.4 Is your institution well-equipped to prepare students to engage meaningfully in the emerging global and technological society in which we live?					
1.5 Are the educators in your institution knowledgeable about the wide array of resources that students may draw upon from their cultural communities and families when they negotiate risky environments?					
1.6 Do the educators in your institution recognize that cultural community structures serve as spaces for practicing and enacting cognitive activities that shape the perspectives of learners?					
1.7 Do the educators in your institution understand that learning is life-deep, and that youths grow and develop through constant interactions with their families, communities, and educational institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities?					
1.8 Do the educators in your institution understand that learning is life-wide, extending from immediate and close-up fundamental needs to navigating a wide spectrum of highly varying contexts through life?					

Principles	Rating				
	Hardly at All		Somewhat		Strongly
<b>2.0 Are the educators in your institution aware that learning takes place not only in schools, colleges, and universities but also in the multiple contexts and valued practices of everyday lives across the life span?</b>					
2.1 Do the educators in your institution recognize that learners do not learn just in schools, colleges, and universities but also in multiple contexts, such as family settings, community settings, work settings, and digitally mediated settings?					
2.2 Do the educators in your institution recognize that the valued practices of everyday life that you experience across the life span provide vibrant, continual spaces for learning in school, college, and university settings?					
2.3 Do the educators in your institution pay sufficient attention to how learning that takes place in dynamic contexts reflects the intersecting and cross-fertilizing forces of the digital mediation of texts and the globalization of textual influences?					
2.4 Do the educators in your institution recognize that life-long, life-wide, and life-deep learning is occurring in semiotic domains enabled by multi-modal texts and cultural resources that youths engage in and draw upon?					
2.5 Does your institution provide students novel forms of learning and meaning-making through diverse forms of technology?					
2.6 Is access to technology distributed equitably within your institution among students from different ethnic, cultural, language, and social-class backgrounds?					
2.7 Does your institution provide professional development programs to help teachers and instructors develop the knowledge and skills needed to create new pedagogies that incorporate and take into account the life-long learning of students in multiple semiotic domains?					
2.8 Do the curriculum and styles of teaching in your institution provide independent, project-based, problem-solving learning experiences that are meaningfully connected to the world outside of formal educational environments?					

Principles	Rating				
	Hardly at All		Somewhat		Strongly
<b>3.0 Do the educators in your institution understand that all learners need multiple sources of support from a variety of institutions to enhance their personal and intellectual development?</b>					
3.1 Do the students in your institution have access to after-school programs, community youth programs, and informal learning opportunities that will help them develop forms of social capital that will positively influence their long-term development and learning?					
3.2 Are the students in your institution offered opportunities to access learning environments and communities that support their multiple developmental needs in a consistent and personalized way?					
3.3 Are the students in your institution supported in setting life goals and in acquiring social and emotional competencies that they will draw on across their life pursuits?					
3.4 Do the educators in your institution recognize that the accomplishments of youth are not gained just through individual effort, but are also the result of the coordinated cultivation and the strategic use of learning resources from communities, groups, and families?					
3.5 Do the students in your institution have the opportunity to receive multiple forms of mentoring while they learn about a range of perspectives, expand their social networks, and develop various forms of social capital?					
3.6 Do the educators in your institution have a holistic view about youth learning, well-being, and development, and recognize that they are accomplished within and by supportive communities?					
3.7 Do the students in your institution have the opportunity to access various forms of education-relevant capital and institutions of human learning and development needed to supplement their formal education?					
3.8 Do the educators in your institution understand and acknowledge that students tend to perform better when there are supports for academic and personal development in their homes and communities?					
3.9 Do the educators in your institution encourage students to participate in supplementary educational opportunities?					

Principles	Rating			
	Hardly at All		Somewhat	Strongly
<b>4.0 Do the educators in your institution understand that learning is facilitated when learners are encouraged to use their home and community language resources as the basis for expanding their linguistic repertoires?</b>				
4.1 Does your institution provide students a supportive environment in which they can develop different linguistic repertoires to meet the demands of various communication tasks?				
4.2 Do the educators in your institution understand that language learning and use is a life-long and life-wide process?				
4.3 Do the educators in your institution understand the relationship between language learning at home and language learning in formal educational settings?				
4.4 Do the educators in your institution recognize that student learning may be stymied if students are not allowed to use their existing language resources or if they are viewed as deficient in language resources?				
4.5 Do the educators in your institution discuss the ways in which learning is mediated through language in formal and informal settings?				
4.6 Do the educators in your institution view the ability to speak another language as an asset, not as a liability?				
4.7 Are educators in your institution aware of the connections between the languages or codes of the culture of power and social-class mobility?				
4.8 Does your institution provide students equal opportunities to learn the languages of power, academic content, and other knowledge, strategies, and skills?				
4.9 Does the curriculum in your institution build on the language experiences and resources that students bring to the formal learning environment from their homes and communities?				

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## The LIFE Center

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