

2011

To LEARN or Not to LEARN: When Policy and Pedagogy Collide

Priscilla Shannon Gutierrez
New Mexico School for the Deaf

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm>

Recommended Citation

Gutierrez, Priscilla Shannon (2011) "To LEARN or Not to LEARN: When Policy and Pedagogy Collide," *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*: Vol. 26: Iss. 2, Article 7.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.1795>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Language Arts Journal of Michigan by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

Priscilla Shannon Gutiérrez

To LEARN or Not to LEARN: When Policy and Pedagogy Collide

The past decade has seen educators and administrators across the country confronted with an increasing number of federal mandates and legislation which centralize educational decision-making, and that proponents purport are designed to improve accountability and performance in the American public school system. Accountability, high expectations, academic rigor, and outcome-based learning are popular themes embedded within said mandates. Recent legislation has included No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race to the Top, the Blueprint for Reform, the LEARN Act, and the Striving Readers Act. Currently, Congress is debating the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as well as the LEARN Act and the Striving Readers Act. In advancing the federal education agenda, President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan maintain the administration's recommendations are grounded in research and therefore have merit (Welner & Molnar, 2007).

In order to receive funding under Race to the Top, the administration has put pressure on states to adopt a set of common core standards that were recently developed by the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (Mathis, 2010). States must also identify the lowest 5% of their schools based on test scores and graduation rates and "fix" them using one of four methods: school closure, take-over by a charter school or school-management organization, transformation (e.g. longer school day), or turnaround, which requires the entire teaching staff be fired. None of the four proscribed methods put forth by Arne Duncan have any basis in research or evidence of success.

Proponents of the LEARN Act and the Striving Readers Act include The Business Roundtable, The Broad Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the International Reading Association (IRA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Kent Williamson, the Executive Director of NCTE, believes that the LEARN Act should be taken seriously by members of the organization and other educators because the language of the act provides a breakthrough in a number of areas, including the use of formative assessment, job-embedded professional development, the use of diverse texts to teach reading, and the use of strategies to enhance student motivation (Williamson, 2011).

Critics of the LEARN Act, in contrast, believe it to be a reprise of the No Child Left Behind Act because it continues to make the five "essential components" of reading identified by the National Reading Panel: phonological awareness, phonic decoding, vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension as centerpieces of instruction. Furthermore, critics argue that the LEARN Act assumes direct and explicit

instruction is the only means by which children learn, and that the term "formative assessment" has been hijacked by testing companies, and that it will increase standardized testing. (Krashen, 2010).

The rationale behind many of these accountability mandates is that the United States has fallen behind in international rankings and the country's ability to compete in the global marketplace will suffer as a result. A market-based approach to the education sector includes competition, sanctions and rewards which are touted as the path by which American students will regain prominence in the global economy. However, a number of serious concerns about this rationale, as well as the purported research behind policy decisions have been raised and call into question whether the direction educational policy in the United States and the pedagogical practices required by said policy will actually benefit students (McQuillan, 1998; Welner & Molnar, 2007). This article seeks to address these concerns and answer the question of who benefits from the decisions being made.

The current push for standards and accountability can be considered an extension of the education proposals of President George H.W. Bush, who met with members of the National Business Roundtable in 1989, and who together put forth nine essential components of a high quality education system that included standards, assessment, and accountability (Emery, 2007). From that point in time, business leaders' involvement in developing education policy has taken a dramatic upturn. The Business Roundtable has successfully persuaded the nation's governors, mayors, editors and others that the best way to close the achievement gap is through high-stakes testing even though there is not research to support their position (Emery, 2007).

Pro-accountability think-tanks around the nation are cranking out well-funded and slickly produced reports that are ideologically-driven but have little basis in research. Foundations financed by wealthy Americans such as Eli Broad and Bill Gates also produce recommendations that are ideologically driven, but lack evidence to support them. Nonetheless these reports have a profound impact in influencing state and national policy decisions. In 2006, thirteen think tank reports were reviewed to see if they met the minimum standards for social science inquiry. Out of the thirteen reports, only two were considered to even minimally pass muster, with the same flaws repeated over and over again such as shoddy empirical analysis, ideology trumping facts, and conclusions unsupported by the data and analyses (Welner & Molnar, 2007).

No Child Left Behind raised the specter of accountability for teachers by attaching Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to test scores whose items often had very little relationship to state standards or curricula in use in schools. However, the

act itself was bereft of educational ideas and its technocratic approach measures “success” solely on the most basic skills that are easy to measure but not necessarily important to learn. The act had no vision other than raising test scores, treating data as evidence while ignoring the importance of knowledge (Ravitch, 2010). Because so much rides on test score results, one of the consequences of NCLB has been a narrowing of said curricula to what is tested, as well as investing much of the school year to test prep.

Much of educational policy of late has been informed by think-tank reports, business leaders and private corporations. The exclusion of educators in the development of educational policy has not been seen as problematic by political leaders and policy makers. The National Reading Panel consisted of only one educator, Joanne Yatvin, and the common core standards were drafted in a single year by Achieve, a corporation that met in private and was staffed almost exclusively by employees of the corporation, testing companies, and pro-accountability groups such as the Hoover Institute (Mathis, 2010). The current trend to vilify teachers contributes to their deprofessionalization, increases the demand for “teacher-proof” materials, and virtually guarantees their exclusion in policy-setting discussion.

Because of NCLB’s emphasis on phonological awareness and the development of phonics skills as precursors to reading, many of the literacy programs currently in use in classrooms include the use of decodable texts that emphasize the learning of phonics at the expense of quality literature. These programs demand teachers maintain fidelity to the strict sequence and pacing of lessons. The impetus behind these scripted programs is that all students will experience the same “research-based” reading instruction which will result in improved literacy skills. However, there is little scientific evidence that scripted reading programs which utilize decodable texts are successful in developing better readers (Coles, 2000 & 2003; Allington, 2008).

And while the LEARN Act calls for the use of varied texts when teaching reading, the fact that four publishing companies (McMillan, Harcourt, Pearson, & Houghton Mifflin) control 70% of the textbook market is of concern (Center for Education Reform, 2001). History textbooks in particular are subject to sanitization or outright socio-political revisions that are grounded in belief systems and opinions rather than facts. The recent decision by the Texas School Board to whitewash history by eliminating Thomas Jefferson as one of the prominent thinkers who inspired revolution, and the debate about including creationism as part of science curricula are but two examples of how textbooks decisions are turning schools into “empires of boredom” rather than centers of dialogue and learning (Czitrom, 2010; Ravitch, 2010).

Proponents of the LEARN Act are encouraged by its language requiring formative and summative assessments be utilized. However the increasing reliance on standardized test scores as the means by which teachers and schools are evaluated is troubling and likely will impact how formative assessment is defined. The over-reliance on standardized approaches to assessment endangers the formative aspects of evaluating student progress, which historically has been con-

ducted by the teacher. These new commercial “formative” tests are often tied to publishers’ texts, are not teacher-driven, and ignore instructional decisions based on individual student needs (Krashen, 2010).

Another issue with the assessment language embedded within the LEARN act is the lack of student involvement in the evaluation process. The types of assessment listed (i.e., formative, diagnostic, and summative), are all designed to capture information about student learning. No one would argue that assessment of learning is an integral part of the education process. However, nothing in the act addresses assessment for learning, which centers on student involvement and ownership of students’ learning trajectory. A critical component of successful

A critical component of successful assessment systems provides students with information on where they are at, and in collaboration with their teacher, plotting a course to take them where they need to go.

assessment systems provides students with information on where they are at, and in collaboration with their teacher, plots a course to take them where they need to go. The LEARN act, the Blueprint for Success, and the Striving Readers act reinforce the supposition that education is something to be done to students rather than *with* them.

High-stakes testing, in whatever form it takes, creates unintended pitfalls and consequences. In their eagerness to show “results,” over the past several years states have dumbed down standards as well as cut scores on standardized tests. In 2006, a New York 7th grade student was required to achieve 59.6% correct on the state math test in order to be considered proficient. By 2009, the proficiency rate was dropped to 44% (Meier, 2010). Additionally, the gains reported in the Chicago Public Schools while Arne Duncan was CEO have been shown to be an exclusive result of changing how tests are scored rather than any genuine improvement in student learning (Meier, 2010).

A number of states have passed legislation or are considering legislation which would tie the bulk of teacher evaluations to student test scores. These states include Florida, New Mexico, New York, New Hampshire, Texas, Ohio, California, Georgia, Tennessee, and Massachusetts. Legislators have pushed ahead with this teacher evaluation approach in spite of broad agreement among statisticians, psychometricians, and economists that student test scores alone are not valid indicators of student achievement in high-stakes personnel decisions (Baker, et al., 2011). Nonetheless, these test scores are being used to largely determine teacher firings as well as school closures. In spite of being recognized by the Rhode Island Foundation as a school who was striving to move from a failing status to a high-performing one, as well as being applauded by the Rhode Island Commissioner’s report as the school with the highest gains in the state, the entire Central Falls High School staff was fired in early 2010, based on persistent low test scores and the breakdown in negotiations over working a longer school day without pay (Jordan, 2010). Both President

Obama and Education Secretary Duncan applauded the firings as justified, courageous, and necessary (Whitney, 2010), completely ignoring the two previous reports commending the schools' efforts at reform. It is not improbable to think that the formative assessments required by the LEARN Act will become part of the standardized, high-stakes testing generated by publishing companies rather than teacher-driven assessments which inform day-to-day instructional practice.

Many standardized tests are machine-scored but the results are far from fool-proof. Errors in scorings in a number of states (e.g., Florida, Arizona, Minnesota, Virginia, Wyoming, Arkansas, South Carolina, Michigan, and Washington) have resulted in penalties to staff as well as delayed graduations or unearned scholarships, as well as law-suits against testing companies (Strauss, 2010). Just as troubling is the lack of qualified personnel who are hired to score the written-response portions of high-stakes tests. Every spring, test-scoring companies such as Pearson or Prentice-Hall, hire temporary workers who are willing to work for low wages and are willing to follow the absurd and ever-changing guidelines (DiMaggio, 2010). Scorers

A number of studies have shown that two of the biggest contributors to literacy development is student access to high-quality books and the quality of school libraries.

are paid 30-70 cents per paper, and so there is a large incentive to rush through student work in order to make sufficient money. Moreover, manipulation of test scores is not out of the question. Scorers are told that the test score given should closely match previous test scores (e.g., if 40% received a level 3 the previous year, the same percentage should receive a 3 this year) (DiMaggio, 2010). This has not stopped the Obama administration from encouraging states to make greater use of student test scores as the means to determine teacher pay as well as job tenure.

As part of the market-based approach to education, providing teachers with bonus pay for test scores has been touted as a viable tool for reform. However, there is sufficient evidence to determine that pay-for-performance does not raise test scores, let alone student knowledge. A recent study by the National Center on Performance Incentives indicated rewarding teachers with bonus pay did not improve student test performance (National Center on Performance Incentives, 2010); and the much-heralded \$75 million experiment in New York City that rewarded teachers based on test scores did not improve student achievement (Greene, 2011).

There is a body of evidence in existence that identifies the biggest obstacle to learning as well as the pedagogical practices and resources that have positive impacts on student reading ability. To-date, very little of the policy decisions coming out of Washington have addressed either eliminating said obstacles or appear to take into account successful pedagogical practice.

Poverty has been identified by several researchers as the single biggest contributor to the lack of academic achievement (Bracey, 2009; Coles, 2008/2009; Berliner, 2009). Rather, when the specter of poverty's impact on education is men-

tioned, often it is naysayed as teachers merely making excuses for their own failure. Out of all the industrialized nations in the world, the United States has the highest rate of children living in poverty. Nation-wide, 25% of children live in poverty, and the rate skyrockets to over 50% for those who reside in the inner-city (Berliner, 2009). No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and the Blueprint for Reform incorrectly assume that increased educational achievement is the route out of poverty, and these mandates stand in place of policies such as job creation in eliminating poverty (Anyon & Greene, 2007; Berliner, 2009). When the federal government and the business community rely on market-based reforms in education to reduce poverty, the social costs of failure are enormous and the it is the taxpayer who shoulders the burden (Anyon & Greene, 2007).

Richard Allington's (2008) analysis of the research-based interventions within the Response to Intervention (RTI) model identified four main factors that accelerate literacy skills with struggling readers. Sadly, the interventions recommended by the RTI model do not match Allington's findings. The first factor is group size. Struggling readers who were provided 1:1 support via tutoring were able to accelerate their reading skills by more than one year. Next is the expertise of the teacher and how often the student actually works with the expert teacher rather than a reading specialist, aide, or volunteer in the classroom. The third factor is instruction that is designed to closely match the student's needs and abilities. Allington noted that the packaged reading programs in use in classrooms today by and large are actually "anti-scientific," and that less consideration has been spent on determining if an intervention is appropriate rather than if a student is "resistant to treatment." The fourth factor identified by Allington was whether the intervention closely aligned to what was going on the rest of the day in the classroom (e.g., selecting vocabulary from classroom instruction versus isolated, non-related target vocabulary).

A number of studies have shown that two of the biggest contributors to literacy development are student access to high-quality books and the quality of school libraries. Children of poverty have the lowest reading test scores. Not surprisingly they have very little access to books in their homes, communities or schools. Neuman and Celano (2001) found a huge disparity in access to books between students in middle-class or affluent neighborhoods and students in poor neighborhoods in terms of the home, availability to the public library, and schools.

During the past decade, Keith Curry Lance conducted a number of studies in various states on the impact of school libraries and reading achievement (Curry Lance, undated; Curry Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pannell, 2002). He found that the size of the school library, in terms of its staff and the size of its collection are direct predictors of reading scores. When school libraries have higher levels of professional and total staffing, larger collections of print and electronic resources, and more funding, students tended by as much as 15% to score higher on state reading tests.

Instruction that is closely aligned to individual student needs can result in higher levels of student engagement and ownership of learning, especially where children of poverty or diverse-needs students are concerned (Shannon-Gutierrez,

2002). Children who come to our schools without the appropriate linguistic, cognitive, or social skills deemed necessary for academic success are considered at-risk for failure because they are unable to “conform” to the culture of the school. As proficient users of language and literacy, teachers need to have a thorough grounding in the dynamic relationship between language and cognitive development in order to organize successful experiences with literacy. Pre-packaged programs cannot meet the individual needs of children because they cannot adequately address their learning styles, needs, and diverse backgrounds (National Reading Panel, 1999). Moreover, commercial reading programs that require strict sequential fidelity take the professional decision-making out of the hands of teachers who work directly with students and place it in the hands of a supposed one-size-fits-all magic bullet that research clearly shows does not exist.

Dialogue, conversation, and reflection about texts and learning are powerful cognitive strategies that enhance reading skills. These strategies include making connections, questioning, determining importance, inferencing, and creating mental imagery (Ketch, 2005). Pedagogical approaches that incorporate these cognitive strategies stem from the belief that students construct meaning as they read and therefore must be active participants in the reading process rather than passive recipients of treatment interventions. These pedagogical approaches also stem from the belief that students must have ownership of their own learning.

Which brings us back to the question of what happens when educational policy and pedagogy collide. While some of the language within the LEARN Act is encouraging to its proponents, many of the decisions and interpretations of policy to-date continue to give educators cause for concern. Policy-makers incorrectly assume that the single vehicle by which children learn is the transmission model of direct, explicit instruction. While this type of pedagogical practice has its place within the repertoire a teacher uses, it ignores what we know about how children learn. The act is silent on the value of dialogue, reflection and discussion, which are central to a student’s processing and internalization of concepts, vocabulary, and skills. The act is also silent on the importance of school libraries and strengthening their role in providing all students, but especially those living in poverty, with increased access to books.

The swift production of 500 pages of common core standards, with federal pressure on states to adopt them within a two-month period, without a thoughtful, considered review, or at the least, field-testing, is also cause for concern (Mathis, 2010). It is not improbable to think that publishing companies will begin to market books and texts aligned with the new standards, and that additional tests will be developed that are based on the common core standards.

Given the current dire economic situation that many school districts face, the amount of money spent on pseudo-accountability, high-stakes tests could be better utilized on methods and resources that would actually increase student ability as well as their interest/motivation in reading. These include creating literature-rich classrooms with hundreds of books and other reading material; expanding library collections and resources; instituting high-quality professional development for

teachers that focuses on pedagogy grounded in how students learn rather than how to maintain fidelity to a reading program or how to raise test scores; the development of true formative assessments that provide a body of evidence about the whole child, and which would become the main vehicle for instructional decision-making; and the development of assessments for learning that include students.

Schools as we know them were never designed to level the playing field amongst the diverse group of students who attend public schools nor to mitigate or eradicate the effects of poverty (Ravitch, 2010b). At the very least, schools are designed to raise the floor for all (Meier, 2011). Current educational policy being touted by President Obama and Education Secretary Duncan is not grounded in solid research, and by and large appears to be an extension of many aspects of the ill-conceived No Child Left Behind Act. Current educational policy will not give students ownership of their own learning, nor encourage them to be life-long learners and readers outside of the classroom.

Nor will it encourage pedagogical practices that will provide students with opportunities to become critical thinkers, problem solvers who are capable of contributing to a democracy. By and large, education for most American children in public schools is defined by the ability to get the “right” answer. Dialogue, reflection, and opportunities for developing intellectual, and analytical powers are painfully absent. Given the evidence presented here, it would seem that when policy and pedagogy collide, the biggest losers are our children.

References

- Allington, R. (2008). Podcast on response to intervention. <http://www.reading.org/downloads/podcasts/II-Allington.mp3>
- Anyon, J. & Greene, K. (2007). No Child Left Behind as an anti-poverty measure. *Teacher Education Quarterly*. Spring, 2007. 157-162.
- Anyon, J. (1980). Social class and the hidden curriculum. *Journal of Education*, 162(1), 67-92.
- Allington, R. (2002). *Big brother and the national reading curriculum: How ideology trumped evidence*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Baker, E. L., Barton, P. E., Darling-Hammond, L., et al. (2010). *Problems with the use of student test scores to evaluate teachers*. Economic Policy Institute briefing paper.
- Berliner, D. (2009). Poverty and potential: Out-of-school factors and school success. Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit. <http://epicpolicy.org/publication/poverty-and-potential>.
- Berliner, D.C. (2006). Our impoverished view of educational reform. *Teachers College Record*, 108. Date Accessed: May 2. Retrieved March 12, 2011 from <http://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentid=12106>.
- Bracey, G. (2009). *The Bracey Report on the condition of public education*. Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit. <http://epicpolicy.org/publication/Bracey-Report>.
- Center for Education Reform (2001). The textbook conundrum. What are the children learning and who decides? Date accessed: May, 2001.
- Coles, G. (2008/2009). Hunger, academic success, and the hard bigotry of indifference. *Rethinking Schools*, 23(2).
- Coles, G. (2003). *Reading the naked truth: Literacy, legislation, and lies*. Portsmouth, HM: Heinemann.
- Coles, G. (2000). *Misreading reading: The bad science that hurts children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- Curry Lance, K. (n.d.). The importance of school libraries. Retrieved March 11, 2011 from <http://laurabushfoundation.org/Lance.pdf>.
- Curry Lance, K., Rodney, M. J., & Hamilton-Pennell, C. (2002). *How school libraries improve outcomes for children. The New Mexico Study*. New Mexico State Library, Santa Fe: NM.
- Czitrom, D. (2010). Texas school board whitewashes history. Retrieved March 15, 2011 from http://articles.cnn.com/2010-03-18/opinion/czitrom.texas.textbooks_1_texas-board-history-textbook?_s=PM:OPINION
- DiMaggio, D.(2010). The loneliness of the long-distance test scorer. Retrieved March 10, 2011 from *Monthly Review*. 62(7). <http://www.monthlyreview.org/101201dimaggio.php>;
- Emery, K. (2007). Corporate control of public schools: High stakes testing in its historical perspective. *Teacher Education Quarterly*. 25-44.
- Garan, E. (2007). *Smart answers to tough questions*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Garan, Elaine (2002). *Resisting reading mandates: How to triumph with the truth*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Green, E. (2011). Study: \$75M teacher pay initiative did not improve achievement. Retrieved March 13, 2011 from <http://gothamschools.org/2011/03/07/study-75m-teacher-pay-initiative-did-not-improve-achievement>.
- Jordan, J. D. (2010). Every Central Falls teacher fired, labor outraged. *Rhode Island News*. Retrieved March 13, 2011 from http://projo.com/news/content/central_falls_trustees_vote_02-24-10_EO_HI83C_v59...
- Ketch, A. (2005). Conversation: The comprehension connection. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(1), 8-13.
- Krashen, S. (2010). Comments on the LEARN Act. Retrieved March 20, 2011 from www.skdrashen.com/articles/comments_on_the_LEARN_Act.pdp.
- Mathis, W.J. (2010). The "Common Core" standards initiative: an effective reform tool? Retrieved March 11, 2011 from The Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice. http://greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Mathis_NationalStandards.pdf.
- McQuillen, J. (1998). Seven myths about literacy in the United States. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 6(1). Retrieved March 12, 2011 from <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=6&n=1>.
- Meier, D. (2010). Merit pay fails another test. September, 28. Retrieved March 14, 2011 from <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/Bridging-Differences/merit-pay>.
- Meier, D. (2011). Something to fight for. Retrieved March 17, 2011 from http://blogs.edweek.org/Bridging-Differences/2011/03/blog_march_17_dear_diane.html.
- Miller, L. (2010). Arne Duncan applauds the Rhode Island school firing of whole staff. Retrieved March 15, 2011 from <http://millerm ps.wordpress.com/2010/02/25/arne-duncan-applauds-the-rhode-island-school...>
- National Center on Performance Incentives (2010). NCPI researchers announce results of POINT experiment. Retrieved March 14, 2011 from <http://www.performanceincentives.org/news/detail.aspx?pageaction=ViewSinglePublic&L...>
- National Reading Panel (1999). *Report of the national reading panel: Teaching children to read: Summary Booklet*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.
- Neuman, S.B. & Celano, D. (2001). Access to print in low-income and middle-income communities: An ecological study of four neighborhoods. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(1), 8-26.
- People Make a Difference (2011). Guest: Stephen Krashen. March 14. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLcootU9lc>.
- Ravitch, D. (2010a). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Ravitch, D. (2010b). The great accountability hoax. Retrieved March 14, 2011 from <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/Bridging-Differences/accountability-hoax>.
- Schools Matter. (2010). Valerie Strauss interviews Diane Ravitch. Retrieved 3/16/11 from <http://www.schoolsmatter.info/2010/06/valerie-strauss-interviews-diane.html>
- Shannon-Gutiérrez, P. (2002). In search of bedrock: Organizing for success with diverse needs children in the classroom. *Journal of Latinos in Education*, 1(1). 49-64.
- Strauss, V. (2010). New test-scoring problems for Pearson. *The Answer Sheet*. Retrieved March 19, 2011 from <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/answer-sheet/standardized-tests/new-test-scoring-problems-for.html>.
- Welner, K.G. & Molnar, A. (2007). Truthiness in education. *Education Week*. Retrieved March 16, 2011 from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/02/28/25welner.h25.html?level>.
- Whitney, M. (2010). Obama applauds mass firing of teachers, just like when he applauded the mass firing of nanksters. Oh wait. Retrieved March 17, 2011 from <http://workinprogress.firedoglake.com/2010/03/03/obama-applauds-mass-firing-of-teacher...>
- Williamson, K. (2009). The LEARN Act and NCTE. Retrieved March 11, 2011 from <http://ncte2008.ning.com/forum/topics/the-learn-act-and-ncte>.

Priscilla Shannon Gutiérrez is the Coordinator of Educational Outreach to Public Schools at the New Mexico School for the Deaf. Previously, she has worked as a principal of a bilingual charter program for deaf students, a literacy coach, and a mentor teacher specializing in literacy and language acquisition for English language learners. Priscilla has authored a number of articles and book chapters, and was the 2009 recipient of the *Kenneth Goodman In Defense of Good Teaching Award*.

MRA Summer Literature Conference

Words Connect Us

Reserve your spot at the

2011 Literacy Conference

July 19-20, 2011 Lansing, MI

Register TODAY

www.michiganreading.org