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# Introduction

**H**ow do two separate people from different places and with different roles actually go about writing one sentence, let alone a book? Our answer takes some explaining as it reflects what we believe is needed in education now. The process of co-writing this book began, as many collaborations do, from talking. We met at a local coffee shop—one where there’s free Wi-Fi, customers can linger as long as they want, and the aroma of hand-roasted coffee makes it easy to relax, sit and talk, and generate ideas. This wasn’t our first experience in writing collaboratively. We had co-written a chapter in an edited series about academic language and found the experience to be powerful in terms of melding our ideas into a collective piece. It wasn’t that we didn’t see things differently at times. We each had our own points of view, which probably accounts for our ability to advocate tenaciously—a quality that could have been disastrous to our writing partnership if it weren’t also paired with our habits as educators to listen and seek solutions for the greater good. Co-writing a chapter, we found, was as stimulating and thought provoking as it was a complicated and circuitous process. Our willingness to listen to and value each other’s divergent views helped to expand our individual and collective thinking and work. When we had different views (and we did often) or weren’t sure how to proceed, we stopped the writing process and didn’t start up again until we had a clear idea of how to truly factor these in to go forward. These stop, reflect on each other’s ideas, agree/disagree, and come to agreement experiences are emblematic of what we believe is urgently needed in education.

We’re in a time of dramatic changes in education, but when it comes to the struggles of Latinos, African Americans, Alaskan Natives and indigenous Americans, English learners, and students living in poverty, little has changed for decades regarding how badly school is going. While new accountability standards and teacher and administrator evaluation systems are challenging every educator in

unprecedented ways, the sheer number of students from these under-represented populations (they are predicted to be the majority population by 2020) should instantly raise our level of alarm. However, we believe the amount of time that's being focused on understanding and making these regulations and initiatives work is sapping the energy to do what is really most needed: to make education truly work for the very groups that it is not currently working for. This is not a new battle cry.

In 1988, Lisa Delpit, renowned for her scholarly contributions in education, gave a speech titled "The Silenced Dialogue: Power Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children" at the ninth annual Ethnography in Education Forum. In it, she called for us to listen, really listen, and value different perspectives. To do this, we have to be willing to learn with and from each other in this important work. In addition, Delpit called for educators to embrace the diversity that is occurring in our classrooms and simultaneously support students from these diverse cultural, racial, economic, and linguistic backgrounds to be successful in school. To do the latter, we believe, requires taking the time to really sort through what it means to be a successful learner. What do we mean by successful? Being a successful student in today's schools means having the skills, competencies, and confidence to be active in the knowledge acquisition process, being a full member of the learning community in which this is occurring, and having the capacity to express oneself successfully in school, on state tests, and beyond—all the while learning to be an independent and critical thinker. We believe that change is possible only when we (students, teachers, families, the school community, and the community at large) are all in it together, working collaboratively to ensure that education works for everyone. In other words, teaching does not rest with teachers alone; it is a collective responsibility that works when everyone is active and welcomed and where interactions, and lots of them, are constantly encouraged and promoted.

So how two authors come up with one text is akin to how educators, students, and families must come together. For this introduction, for example, Debbie would send Michael a draft of her thoughts. Michael would write back, "What if we said [this and that thing I'm burning to say]?" Debbie might then say, "Okay, when we do this, how will we be sure that we also include . . . ?" The roles were reversed numerous times during the project and are characteristic of our writing process—to this minute!

Many drafts were written, each making us work harder, more precisely, and ultimately more efficiently at what became this final

product. In the process, we came to know and value as well as challenge each other while at the same time trusting that what we wrote would be based on mutual respect and collaboration. Our process for creating this book was not just a model of authors' collaboration but also a depiction of the type of collaborative dynamic that is sorely needed in contemporary education.

As educators, our individual perspective, despite our most sincere and idealistic drive to bring out the best in our students, is missing something. It is always a partial picture of any whole and requires the contributions of others to be more complete. However, we believe that teachers have the pivotal role in fostering an open and much needed dialogue with students, families, the school community, and the community at large to ensure that education works. No one person or authority has the answers. Rather, when we invite and are open to what others bring, when we allow ourselves to be changed by different perspectives, and when we see these as gifts rather than obstacles to what we can achieve, then we can truly be in it together.

In this spirit, we called on many teachers from across the United States to furnish us with much-needed examples in practice. To articulate specifics and provide a practical roadmap for this work, we also infused several research-based preparation and instructional strategies to show how we can support learners from many different cultural, racial, linguistic, and economic experiences to be successful in school. The result of our collaborative efforts is a book that is dedicated to teachers and teachers in training who, like all of us in public education work, are experiencing the productive tensions of working with an increasingly diverse student population against a backdrop of regulatory initiatives. We believe strongly that we can make education work for all when we continually expand and develop our circles of collaboration to be truly in it together and that there is no better or more important time to do this than right now.