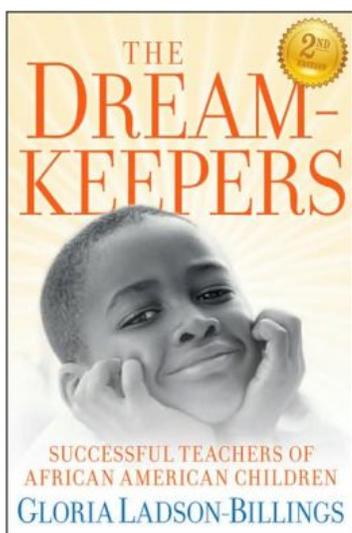


EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner, Ph.D. & Estanislado S. Barrera IV, Ph.D.

This year, 2014, marks the 20th anniversary of Gloria Ladson-Billings's groundbreaking text "The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Students," which introduced into popular attention the concept of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to the academic parlance. The book, now in its second edition, is now a seminal text on the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy. Despite over 20 years of popularity and the often-evoked phrase culturally relevant literature, little appears to have changed in the performance of historically underserved populations. Simultaneously, much effort and attention has been paid to the authentic and balanced engagement of children in literacy. Consequently, as editors of this journal, we were motivated to issue a special call for papers that centered on connecting balanced literacy with culturally relevant pedagogy. Our hope was to open a dialogue about the ways that literacy educators think about, and apply, concepts of culturally relevant pedagogy in practice.



Cover of the 2nd edition of *The Dreamkeepers*

THE ISSUE

We were excited to receive a number of enthusiastic responses to the call and are pleased with the five main

articles we moved forward with. Additionally, we have a profile of an in-service teacher who is being recognized for her contributions to the field at bridging culturally relevant pedagogy with balanced approaches to literacy instruction.

Our first article, *Using Balanced Literacy for Delivering Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to Prepare Teachers: A 20-Year Perspective on Dreamkeepers*, from Hartlep and Joseph, applies a very special and unique perspective on balanced literacy in a context we do not often associate with our work – the university classroom. In their article they work to understand balanced literacy and culturally relevant pedagogy through the case lenses of two teacher educators. The second main article, *Living Globally—Teaching Responsively: Stories from a Literacy Educator in China*, authored by Cavendish and Ticknor explores the role of a 1st grade teacher as a cultural broker in a multilingual and multicultural classroom in China. Their article draws richly on the experiences and narratives of the teacher they call Leila. Johnson and Gonzalez bring us our third piece, *Culturally Relevant Practices and Management of an ELA Teacher: A Tale of Two Classrooms*, which understands the varied teaching practices of an ELA teacher based on the different groups of students she taught. Their piece reminds readers that content and culture are equally important and do not live independently of each other. Rice, the author of our fourth main piece, *Balancing Literacy With Other Curricular Demands: An Autobiographical Account*, brings us to the middle levels context to understand the engagement of English language learners. Rice sheds light on the role of standards from both the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the World-class Instructional Design Association (WIDA) standards. Given the current trends toward accountability and educational standards-based reform this article is timely both to the call and to our current concerns in education. The fifth and final main piece, *Using Their Own Stories: A Culturally Relevant Response to Intervention*, presents on a critical action research study with a Response to Intervention (RtI) reading group, helping ring to light the intersection of culturally relevant teaching, balanced literacy, and special needs of learners. Finally this issue ends with a profile of *Meredith Labadie* a kindergarten teacher who works to authentically engage her students, in culturally relevant ways. Labadie's classroom profile includes multiple language learners representing many distinct cultures.

As editors of the journal we hope that you enjoy each piece independently, and that as a collection ideas of balanced literacy and culturally relevant pedagogy help you to think through our own contexts. This is our journal's second special issue in the last two years. Now that we have explored two special issues we have decided to return to one journal per year that we can release in conjunction with the IRA Annual Meeting in July. So, please submit your manuscripts, and we will continue to review on a rolling basis as we prepare for the July 2015 issue.