
The Adolescent Quest for Meaning through Multicultural Readings: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

THIS ARTICLE EXAMINES the results of a study of the role the library media program plays in easing the adolescent immigrant's struggle with alienation, assimilation, and literary acculturation. Important factors that influenced students included a student-centered learning environment that values cultural diversity, fosters interpersonal learning, accommodates learning styles, promotes use of emerging technologies, and encourages circulation of all materials including hardware. The most important factor in literary acculturation, however, was the peer group process of meaning making (Vandergrift, 1990a). The study showed that adolescent immigrants will find and make meaning about themselves and their personal experiences by exploring, in their peer group, the journey of the archetypal hero. The study also found that students entered the group discussions as culture bearers, but, within the group over a period of time, changes took place as students noted cultural differences and similarities. Together they interacted as culture makers and ultimately emerged as new culture bearers. Their experiences indicate that: (1) one culture does not produce a typical literature that reflects all of the characteristics of its people; (2) not one book or list of books can represent a culture; and (3) literary acculturation is not transmitting heritage as a package deal or forcing the adoption of the cultural patterns of any single group but a process of personal and social change and choice caused by the individual's interaction with peers in a wide variety of literary experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

The immigrant experience of the 3,006 students at Hialeah High School in Dade County, Florida, is the classic heroic story of the archetypal journey, a modern extended metaphor with each new immigrant's personal myth. Although each of their stories is different, the collective story of the student population reflects numberless similar experiences. Underlying each are common struggles: first, the struggle to know and understand the language of their new country while continuing the process of growing in their home language, and, second, the struggle to know and understand the complexities of the world in which they live while yearning to know and understand themselves. In short, no matter the ethnic origin, the student at Hialeah High School has to wrestle with both an inner and outer world in more than one language and in more than one culture. It was the aim of this study to examine the role the library media program plays in assisting young individuals in their journey and in their quest to acculturate.

Results of this case study show that the library media program plays a vital role in assisting young people in the difficult process of literary acculturation. Major factors that influence students are:

1. A student-centered learning environment that values cultural diversity and fosters interpersonal learning.
2. A focus on similarities and differences in personal belief systems, meaning making, and the human condition rather than a focus on similarities and differences in language, culture, and ethnicity.
3. Respect for personal choice and promotion of self-esteem by arranging all print and nonprint resources in various languages in the same Dewey classification order thus ignoring the establishment of isolated special sections for language minority students.
4. Emerging technologies that: (a) accommodate learning styles, (b) reduce over-reliance on language as the single means of getting information or making meaning, and (c) remove limits of linear modes of learning.
5. A strong literature program that: (a) builds on student interest in personal myth, (b) relates it to the archetypal heroic journey in literature of diverse cultures, and (c) depends on a teaching library media specialist to form partnerships with teachers and students and to provide leadership in facilitating the peer group process of making meaning.

BACKGROUND

Refugees arrive daily in Miami seeking a new life and a quality education. When they enroll in the Dade County School System,

they become a part of the fourth largest system in the nation and the third largest business operation in Florida. They join 304,287 students in the district. Of these students, 227,145 are presently enrolled in various bilingual programs. It costs taxpayers approximately \$80 million a year.¹ There is no federal program that aids the refugee impact on the Dade County Schools. Although the metropolitan government collects the school tax for the school system, it exercises no control over its use. The seven member school board, elected by countywide vote, appoints the district superintendent who has responsibility for administration of the 278 schools in the district. The school district is divided into six regions, each with a region superintendent and administrative staff. The ethnic classification of the district's instructional staff does not yet reflect the district's 304,287 students who are predominantly Hispanic (see Figures 1 & 2).

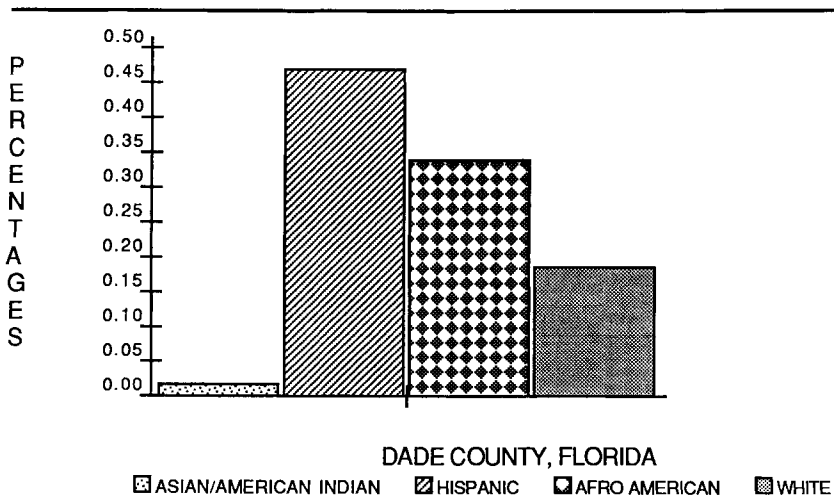


Figure 1. Ethnic composition of student population of Dade County

Many of the new immigrants soon move from Miami to Hialeah, Florida. The city of Hialeah, founded in 1921, began as a flat parcel of sawgrass and scrub bordering the Everglades. It has grown into the second largest city in Dade County with a present, but constantly expanding, population of 188,004. The number of refugees crowding into the area since the Castro regime came into power in Cuba has had an enormous impact on population growth. In 1960, approximately 2,000 Cubans were clustered in the southwest section of Hialeah. When the freedom flights between Cuba and Miami began in 1965, enrollment figures for Cuban refugee students began to show

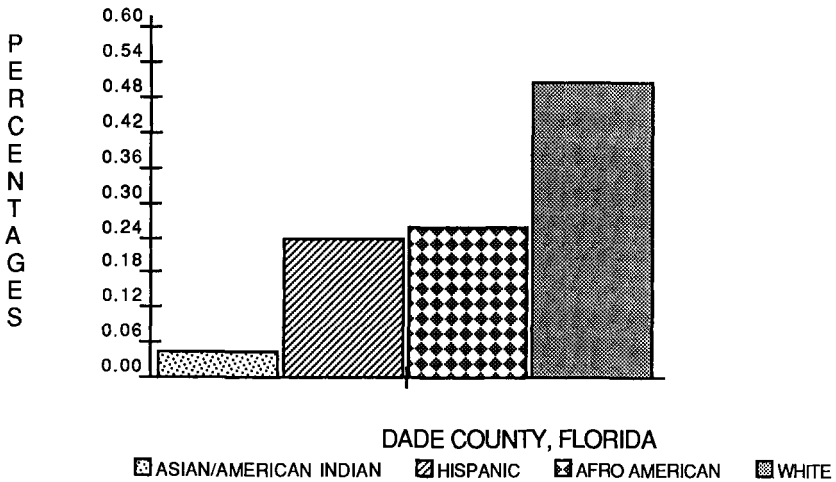


Figure 2. Ethnic composition of instructional staff of Dade County

a steady increase. This was also a district-wide experience, and, at the beginning of the 1972-73 school year, approximately one of every four children in the Dade County Public Schools was from a Spanish-speaking background and the numbers of these students had tripled in less than eight years. Many of these new immigrants settled in Hialeah, and, by 1980, Hispanics represented 75 percent of the city's total population. At the time of this study, Hispanics represented 90.1 percent of the entire population of Hialeah. Accordingly, 42,750 more residents, predominantly Hispanic, have settled in Hialeah in the last decade, which reflects a 22.73 percent growth in population for this lower-middle class community. Since Hialeah has the largest number of industries in Florida, with more than 1,000 factories and over 10,000 businesses, Hialeah employs almost 30 percent of Dade County's manufacturing laborers.

Hialeah High School, one of twenty-nine senior high schools in the Dade County School System, is located in Hialeah, Florida, in the northwestern part of Dade County. Hialeah High School's large sprawling open campus is surrounded by modest family homes, many of which have been converted into small businesses and cottage industries. The school was built in 1954 to accommodate 2,000 students. Presently, Hialeah High School's population of 3,006 students mirrors the demographics of the community. The teaching staff, however, consists of 150 teachers whose ethnic makeup has not changed at the same pace as the student and community population (see Figures 3 & 4).

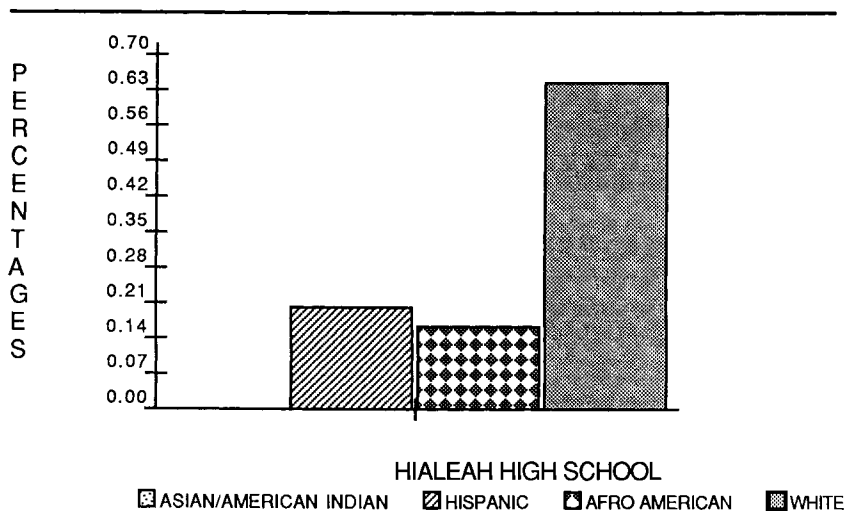


Figure 3. Ethnic composition of instructional staff of Hialeah High School

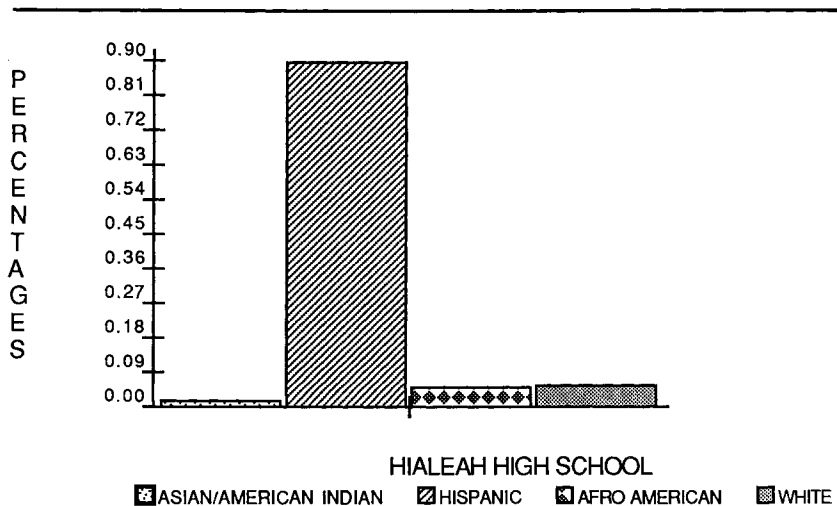


Figure 4. Ethnic composition of student population of Hialeah High School

The targeted site of this study was Hialeah High School's Library Media Center, which accommodates over 200 students an hour for activities such as reading, viewing, listening, browsing, researching, collaborative learning, computing, telecommunicating, producing, creating, and reporting. The Media Center is staffed with two certified media specialists, one library media clerk, one audiovisual specialist,

one television systems technician, and one part-time certified Media Specialist for evening hours. The Media Center is open from 7 A.M. until 9:30 P.M. weekdays. The collection includes 46,035 books, 180 periodicals, 8 newspapers, 7,500 audiovisual materials, and over 500 software programs. In addition to the six terminals that hold *Impact*, Dade County's Public Access Card Catalog on CD-ROM, there are twelve CD-ROM workstations, two telecommunications stations, and approximately thirty-eight public access computers for student use. Every classroom is wired for cable, and instructional programs are distributed throughout the day from the center. Students are encouraged to use the television production studio for presentations. The open access computer area meets a wide variety of needs for students and staff. Hardware and software is provided for both Mac and IBM environments. While most students use word processing programs, others use databases, spreadsheets, simulations, tutorials, and a wide variety of curriculum-related software programs.

Media Services at Hialeah High School are integrated into the total educational program. The Media Specialists attend curriculum council, departmental, and special program meetings and serve on a wide variety of curriculum-related committees. They prepare bibliographies, set up reserve collections, arrange for group presentations, teach information skills, coordinate programs, teach word processing and other computer applications, promote student work and original production, give book talks, provide individual help, plan cooperatively with teachers, provide interlibrary loan, and present in-service workshops on cooperative learning, electronic research strategies, learning styles, reading promotion, and technology application. However, the heart of the center is the literature-based program which was developed originally for students who speak English as a second language but has expanded to the total school population.

THE STUDY

Hialeah High School's faculty and administration recognized an increasing responsibility to meet the needs of immigrants with limited English proficiency who are enrolling daily. Since the majority of the students are from Cuba and Central and South American countries, they speak Spanish as their first language. Spanish is also spoken throughout the community's businesses, churches, and civic organizations. In many homes, Spanish is the only language spoken. Hialeah High has implemented ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and BCC (Bilingual Curriculum Content) programs, but the majority of students are enrolled in regular academic programs where instructional methods are the same today as they were over

thirty years ago. Except for several advanced placement and honors classes, students are heterogeneously placed in regular English classes and score an average of 360 out of a possible 800 on the SAT and 18.1 out of a possible 30 in reading on the ACT. In spite of these low scores, 62 percent go on to college. In the typical classroom setting, teachers are rooted in directive teaching of authorized meaning to the exclusion of all other approaches. Teachers lecture and ask questions. Students guess at what the teacher knows and thinks about the meaning. Knowledge remains a secret until the teacher unveils, through lecture, the chosen literary critical interpretation. Students work within that framework, wrestle with the mystery of meaning, and ignore their own thoughts. Self-esteem crumbles. Efforts toward critical thinking evaporate and the slow insidious killing of joy begins.

In an effort to stop this erosion of joy in reading, the media staff encouraged the cadre² to target the teaching of literature as the focus for school improvement.³ The media center staff provided inservice workshops in reading aloud strategies, adolescent literature, cooperative learning, materials selection, and technology. A predictably favorite feature of the School Improvement Plan was the provision of a substitute for every teacher in the school. On the day of their choice, self-selected teams of teachers were to spend the day in the school media center exploring, inquiring, discovering, and enjoying ways the media center's resources could help students in the process of literary acculturation.

Out of many brainstorming sessions that followed this day, a small team of teachers and the media specialist developed a series of reading projects and strategies around the theme of personal myth and the archetypal hero that have been examined as a part of this study. Two English teachers with four classes each worked with media specialists to present the literature that would launch students into a long-term study of self and the hero in all cultures. Since the other library media programs continued during the literature project, the study looked at students using the library in three different ways: (1) students who were sent to the library on a pass during the school day to seek information in order to complete an assignment designed by the teacher; (2) students who were using the center of their own volition before and after school, during lunch, or in the evening to inquire, discover, explore, or "hang out"; and (3) students who were enrolled in one of eight English classes used in this study.

Data Collection

In examining the role the library media program plays in easing the process of literary acculturation, data were collected through the use of the following:

Interviews

- 1 high school principal
- 1 district bilingual program director
- 1 state legislator
- 1 facilitator for *META*⁴
- 15 media specialists
- 10 teachers
- 50 students

Surveys

- 300 students (Learning Styles Preference Survey)
- 300 students (Media Center Interest/Use Survey)

Documents Examined

- 50 samples of student writing
- 25 samples of student notes
- 100 student reports

Observations of Media Center Use (Four Month Duration)

- Daily observation of students (Approx. 110 per hour)
- Daily observation of teachers (Approx. 40 per day)

Discussants (Archetypal Hero Study)

- 300 students in eight groups

The surveys were in English only because they were administered exclusively to those students who did not need ESOL⁵ or had successfully exited ESOL⁶ programs. However, in the interviews, students were allowed to use either English or Spanish because all the interviews were conducted with students who were using the Media Center. Therefore, they represent a wide range in ability, English language proficiency, native language proficiency, achievement, time lived in the United States, native country, educational experience prior to entering the United States, attitude toward learning, and economic and family status all of which clearly indicated that there is no such thing as a "typical" Hispanic student.

Of the students interviewed in grades ten, eleven, and twelve, 57 percent are from Cuba and the remaining 43 percent of the students represent twenty-seven different countries including the United States. Nineteen percent have arrived in the United States within the last three years, 15 percent have been born in the United States, and the others, representing 66 percent of those interviewed, entered the United States in the early and middle grades.

In determining the role that the total library media program plays in meeting the needs of students in the process of literary acculturation, the following questions were asked:

1. How does the learning environment ease alienation, affect assimilation, and ease the process of literary acculturation?

2. What concerns do adolescents have about differences and similarities in themselves and others?
3. How do students feel about being identified as special and perceived as needing adapted collections and isolated areas for use?
4. How do students who are learning in a second language benefit from technology?
5. What factors should be considered in designing a program to assist young adults in the process of literary acculturation? Can the excavation and authorship of personal myth provide contextual structure for understanding literary myths? Can the use of the archetypal heroic journey in literature from diverse cultures and its relationship to the students' personal myths help students make meaning out of selves, the immigrant experience, and the human condition? How does the media specialist serve the student in the process of discovering joy and meaning in literature?

Although a variety of adults in responsible positions were interviewed for this study, the focus for this article is on data collected from students. Heavy reliance was placed on the daily observations of student responses to the media center's program offerings, student responses in the literature groups, and student responses to the Learning Styles Preference Survey (see Appendix A) and the Media Center Interest/Use Survey (see Appendix B).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Learning Environment

A student-centered learning environment that values cultural diversity and fosters interpersonal learning.

The adolescent, fully engaged in the process of becoming, is tormented by self doubt, and, according to Freud (1935), full of storm and stress. If the adolescent is abruptly flung into a new environment where a language other than the home language is spoken, the normal feelings of alienation are grossly exaggerated. To think that the process of literary acculturation will begin easily or early in the assimilation process, but especially before basic needs (Maslow, 1968, p. 126) are met, is unrealistic. Before students can begin any meaningful interaction with text, they must resolve critical social issues. Intense feelings of alienation in the adolescent immigrant need to be allayed by interaction with a group. Henry Stack Sullivan (1953) contends that the personality is almost entirely the product of interaction with other significant human beings. Seltzer (1989) affirms: "The adolescent dialectic stimulates each young person to search out others in the same condition" (p. 159).

The media center's learning climate is clearly designed by and for students. Students said they instantly knew they were in a special place upon entering the center. Students indicated that they felt wanted in the center and that their languages and cultures were valued. Students particularly enjoyed the informal setting of the center and praised the policies that encouraged group work, peer tutoring, and social conversation. Although only 2 percent of the students surveyed indicated that they needed a quiet area in which to study, virtually all felt that the noise level in the center was conducive to study. One senior who had been using the library daily since he arrived from Nicaragua two and one-half years ago commented that the library was to him, "a home away from home. I found this place my second day in America and I have been hanging out here ever since. I feel good here, safe, and comfortable. All my friends are here." Students recently exiting from the ESOL classes said that, after a short time in the media center, they felt their feelings of fear and insecurity lessen. They noted that, prior to entering the media center, feelings of insecurity were magnified by the strangeness of the English language and many cultural differences. Imagining the vast silent world of print in the English language and then "seeing those rows and rows of books" was, according to one student, "enough to quit school." Asked why he stayed, he responded: "Nobody pushed me to make a fool of myself, to let everybody know I couldn't yet handle all those books. I hung around here with my friends, fooled with all the computers, talked a lot, and found out that I wanted to know more." Another student said that he felt that whatever language he used with his friends in the center was okay, but that he had been yelled at in his classrooms for speaking Spanish. Other students appreciated being able to speak in a language other than English for three reasons:

1. They were under an implied school policy to speak English in all classrooms other than Bilingual Curriculum Content classes.
2. Peer tutoring in their native languages helps them use library materials and equipment skillfully and in their efforts to make meaning.
3. They felt that their ability to speak a language other than English gave them feelings of personal value and self worth. Students appreciated being treated with respect and courtesy.

Of the students surveyed in the learning preference survey, 93 percent indicated their preference for learning through some form of collaboration. They cited the following as positive factors that drew them to return to the center:

1. large congregation of peers;
2. varied and busy activities;

3. noise;
4. laughter and general lack of tension;
5. student assistants in the lab and at the workstations;
6. photographs of fellow students spending time at many different activities in the center;
7. student displays, bulletin boards, photographs;
8. large and popular student message center;
9. student birthday board;
10. reading journals and personal myths on display and cataloged in the district's card catalog;
11. student art work;
12. college corner;
13. financial aid notices;
14. career center;
15. job center with current available local jobs listed;
16. student supplies store with frequent mention of computer discs, and assigned paperbacks on sale;
17. free xeroxing, microfiche printing, and printouts from the various workstations;
18. computers for personal use;
19. videos and videorecorders for circulation;
20. books on audiotape and audiocassette recorders for circulation; and
21. air conditioning.

Concerns Adolescents Have About Themselves and Others

A focus on similarities and differences in personal belief systems, meaning making, and the human condition rather than a focus on similarities and differences in language, culture, and ethnicity.

Students had little interest in discussing cultural, ethnic, and language differences and similarities but were gravely concerned about discussing issues that explored similarities and differences in beliefs concerning the reason for existence, the point of learning, the mystery of the brain, the subjects dictated for study, the range of human emotion, and the quality of life. When students were asked to discuss their immigrant experiences, their descriptions centered on common values and sensitivities. The differences traditionally ascribed to race and ethnicity were missing in their accounts. Beyond the common adolescent preoccupations with self, clothes, hair, members of the opposite sex, music, cars, and parties, students demonstrated an uncanny awareness of the universality of the human condition. They seemed to know intuitively that fear, pain, courage, cowardice, anger, sadness, and joy are shared human experiences. Furthermore, most expressed a desire to understand how to make meaning out of these

experiences. Even those who were not interested in the literature classes on the archetypal hero chose to participate when they considered that literature illuminates the joy and dulls the pain of being human and that making meaning out of heroic journeys could provide insight into their own personal journeys.

Respect for Personal Choice and Promotion of Self-Esteem

Students feel better about themselves when they are not identified as special or perceived as needing adapted collections and isolated areas for use.

Since the goal of the program of English for Speakers of Other Languages is to ensure that students entering Dade County Public School with no ability to understand, speak, read, and write English will be able to communicate and function successfully in their English environment within three years, the media center does not have a special section designated for books in languages other than English. All 5,527 books written in other languages are cataloged and shelved by Dewey classification. When a student searches a topic, all books on that subject in one or more languages will be together along with audiotapes, videotapes, records, filmstrips, computer programs, realia, etc. on that same subject. Interestingly, circulation of foreign language books increased slightly after they were integrated into the collection. However, in spite of the availability of books in other languages, the majority of students prefer to check out books in English. Books in languages other than English are checked out for two main reasons according to students: (1) to satisfy an assignment in a Bilingual Curriculum Content class or Advanced Placement Spanish class, and (2) to please or surprise a parent.

Teachers and students alike expressed appreciation of open and equal access policies regarding use, circulation, and organization of print and nonprint materials.

All students, regardless of their level of proficiency in English, are encouraged to use the center and any materials they choose. Students like the "no limit" policy on the number of books and materials that can be checked out, but one student said that he always checks out more than he can handle. Students are particularly pleased with the policy that allows them to check out video- and audiotapes and companion hardware. Speaking for himself and his friends, one student said: "It's a good feeling to be trusted with expensive equipment, and the tapes help me understand the assignment."

Emerging Technologies

Benefits from emerging technologies are that they, (1) accommodate learning styles, (2) remove limits of linear modes of learning, and (3) reduce over-reliance on language as the single means of getting information or making meaning.

In the complicated process of learning in a second language, it is critical that a wide variety of learning formats be offered to accommodate states, styles, and levels of learning. Students with varying proficiency in English, as well as students learning in their native language of English, approach learning in a preferred style based on many factors including age, educational experience, gender, and cultural background. According to Dunn and Dunn (1978): "We are attempting to educate more children with varying levels of intelligence and diversified cultural backgrounds. These students have had varied emotional and psychological experiences, ranging from overindulgence to child abuse. These disparate youngsters have been exposed to highly stimulating technology and an exciting world in which survival is uppermost in the minds of many of their contemporaries" (p. 2). Accordingly, it is not uncommon for a student entering Hialeah High School from a country where he had no formal schooling, no plumbing, and no electricity, to find himself in front of a color monitor with a full text, sound, and graphics database two or three days into his first formal educational experience. One such student, reflecting on his initial experiences with the media center's wide variety of learning technology, told of how he insisted that his mother, grandparents, and cousins return with him to the library the night of his first day in school so that he could "prove he wasn't dreaming and telling stories about all those machines." Later he disclosed that his first database, *Compton's Multimedia Encyclopedia*, is still the source he consults to begin any assignment. He explained that he used to rely solely on the visual assistance, but that now he uses sound and text with skill and confidence.

Observations show that students followed what seemed to be a natural instinct in selecting an approach to learning that suited their needs. The choice of workstation and work area in the media center gave immediate clues as to sensory modality strengths. Visual learners returned frequently to color screens in the various workstations. Audio learners were at the listening stations, and tactile kinesthetic learners worked in the production area or with computer simulation programs. The majority of students observed were field-sensitive learners who enjoyed working with others to achieve a common goal, and the largest numbers of students were consistently found in groups around an electronic encyclopedia.

Since print and nonprint materials on a subject of interest are arranged by Dewey classification together on the same shelf, students were able to select a book, videocassette, audiocassette, computer software, filmstrip, recording, etc. in order to complete the assignment in the mode that matched their learning style preference. Visual learners, of course, selected the video and viewed it at one of four

viewing stations. In each instance, students were joined by one or more students. Several students admitted that they preferred watching a videotape because they felt "lazy" while several others agreed that the videos helped them understand the subject better.

While only 32 percent of the students who took the learning styles preference inventory expressed a preference for auditory learning, over 80 percent of them checked out one or more books on tape. Students unanimously agreed that listening to the book while following along with the text was helpful. Students listened to the books at one of the five listening stations, in their cars, on the Media Center's circulating portable cassette players, or the students' personal tape player. One girl said: "This is a real time saver. I listened to the book while I did the dishes and cleaned my room. Then I made my boyfriend listen in the car while we drove around."

Students with limited language proficiency found searching at a workstation dedicated to a narrow database far easier than searching manually for a printed article. Students said they could get information quickly with limited language skills and limited information skills. Students who cannot find the correct print encyclopedia volume they need in order to find an assigned topic can quickly type the topic into all databases available in the media center. In virtually all instances, when students had a choice between print and electronic databases, they chose the electronic database where they could be surrounded by others who were searching electronically. For the students who chose to interact with computers and with others using computers, the symbolic language of the computer culture emerged for them to use in communicating and learning. Instead of consulting the teacher, students combined problem-solving ideas and interacted with each other and the computer. The interactive computer environment allowed students to explore, experiment, and compare their results with each other instead of waiting for a teacher to eventually show up with temporary assistance. Although teachers objected initially to the noise surrounding computer areas, they were generally pleased with the results of interactive learning. One teacher said: "It is amazing how much they learn from one another, how much they know that I have never imagined. I am learning from them!" The informal cultural, symbolic, and language exchanges that happen in the media center's open access computer area build support for learning in various modes and unleash hidden potential.

Technology radically changed the library media center environment and learning climate at Hialeah High School. Of the 300 students surveyed, 93 percent said that having computers and

computer software in the media center made a difference to them in their use of the media center. The most popular use of computers was word processing. Since the media staff offers word processing instruction during the first semester of a student's first year at Hialeah High School, almost all students were familiar with the media center's policy that encourages frequent use of personal computers. Students and teachers alike felt that use of word processing increased the chance for improved grades. Teachers unanimously praised the benefits of using word processors and reported that the students who used one, even for the first time, wrote clearer and longer papers. Students quickly learned from one another how to use a wide variety of spelling, grammar, thesauri, and graphic programs to improve their efforts.

The electronic encyclopedias, *Compton's Multimedia Encyclopedia*, *Mammals*, *Information Finder*, and *Grolier's Electronic Encyclopedia*, were the second most frequently used technologies and were in use by groups of five to eight students from 7 A.M. until closing time at 9:30 P.M. When the workstations were too crowded to accommodate another patron, staff offered print alternatives. Without exception, students preferred to wait rather than use the print resource. When asked why they made that choice, most students said that they found the information they needed faster and more easily on the electronic encyclopedias, and that they depended on the graphics to help them understand their topic. Of course, the luxury of printing full-text articles from all of the encyclopedias was praised by all the students who were questioned.

Other electronic databases, such as *Infotrac*, *Tom*, *Magazine Article Summaries*, *Newsbank*, *SIRS*, *Shakespeare*, *Choices*, *Peterson's Guide*, and *PC Globe*, were extremely popular. Students were also drawn to the workstation dedicated to *Languages of the World*, a CD-ROM multilingual dictionary database containing eighteen dictionaries in twelve languages. Interactive videodisc programs which are in both Spanish and English, such as *Health: Aids* and *The Louvre*, are booted at 7 A.M. and attract small groups of browsers throughout the day. Surprisingly, very few teachers use or even notice these workstations.

Telecommunications workstations provide access to: *Learning Link*, an online catalog of the film and video collection of the Dade County Schools and the print collection at Miami Public Library, *ERIC*, *Prodigy*, *CompuServe*, and various student bulletin boards, including one developed by the district's computer education department. Language development is encouraged as students send and receive messages from one location to another by use of local bulletin boards. Second, databases are a catalyst for students in their efforts to become more responsible for their own learning.

A Strong Literature Program

A program that focuses on student interest in personal myth and relates it to the archetypal heroic journey in literature of diverse cultures. A teaching library media specialist to form partnerships with teachers and students and to provide leadership in facilitating the peer group process.

In an effort to create joy and build self-esteem through personal and collaborative meaning making, the literature program focused on personal myth and the archetypal hero. Since the fundamental target of the literature program explored in this study valued the reader first and the text second, personal myths were written and discussed first. Next, the study looked at the group process of making meaning of personal myth, of the archetypal hero in poetry and then in novels. Finally, it looked at connections among works in the hero genre.

Using Vandergrift's (1990) theoretical model which "represents an engagement with literature in both a personal and social context" (p. 21), students worked in groups to make meaning out of a literary text using an adult intermediary. The adolescent is in an accelerated stage of becoming and longs to make meaning out of the world. Talking about self is a priority. The goal of the program is to help students understand themselves and others, help them absorb cultures, and gain skill in the subtleties of the English language. Indications were that the process of meaning making was slightly eased by narrowing the broad context of all possibilities in literature to a structured context of the archetypal hero. Students reported that the use of personal myth and the archetypal hero helped them face and understand the fact that people from all cultures had suffered and overcome many obstacles before they experienced personal transformation and, finally, fulfillment or peace. One student said, "I have felt so alone. I thought I was the only one with problems, but when I read the line 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world' (Brooks, 1938, p. 129) spoken by that old man, Ulysses, I felt I had a better shot than he did. Then when we talked about our personal journeys to a new world and I felt we were all in the same boat with wild opportunities, I suddenly felt full of hope." Other students had stories that indicated they had made powerful connections with the hero and his quest. A student said that, through reading the various haikus and other short poems from around the world, he had come to understand that "human beings have always been full of struggle and turbulence, that people have all, at one time or another, felt insignificant, insecure, and afraid." In informal conversations, students who were feeling down or frustrated were told by others to "slay the dragon." Within the groups, it became common

knowledge that: "We all have had to face seemingly insurmountable obstacles." An exploration of the other side of fear and impotence encouraged students to look at personal sources of strength, at the bravery of someone the student knows, perhaps even self.

As students shared meaning in groups by reading short heroic poems and comparing them to their personal myths, they came to see that the basic heroic pattern in all their lives, regardless of cultural background, reduces itself to a monomyth, what Dorothy Norman (1969) describes as the most essential struggle within ourselves (p. 12). The personal myth became a connection from cultural diversity to cultural unity. In addition, the journeys dramatized the singular event of arrival at Hialeah High School where students are not treated as members of an isolated ethnic group but as valued and celebrated members of a richly diverse family. Jung (1964) sees the journey of the hero as dramatizing the human being's inner development toward maturity and psychological wholeness. The only real adventure, according to Jung, is the exploration of our own unconscious and the ultimate goal of this search is to form a harmonious and balanced relationship to self (p. 168). The heroic poem or literary piece serves as the pathway to understanding self. According to George Abbe, the best poetry has been written from subconscious sources under compulsion (Parker, 1969, p. 157). Therefore, the bond between the poet and the reader is strengthened as the group explores the essence of each one. Reik (1948) points out that the aim of the writer is to give a picture of the inner world, the underground of the soul, and that the aim of Freud and subsequent analysts is to investigate the soul and to act as a guide in the labyrinth of the inner world (p. 101). Bringing a heroic poem into the group for meaning making offered limitless opportunities and had a positive effect on students.

Introduction to the archetypal hero began with an oral reading of the great epic of early Spanish literature *Poem of El Cid* (Resnick, 1962) and a discussion afterward. In all the discussions, students wanted to explore the moving scene toward the beginning of the poem when the Cid, banished from Castile by King Alfonso VI, leaves his wife and two daughters. One student remarked that the line "I have loved you as my own soul, but now you see that we must part while we both live; I must go and you must stay behind" (p. 12), reminded him of the Bette Midler song, "Only in Miami Is Cuba So Far Away." Students were encouraged to discuss their departure from their home country and to discuss problems they encountered and how they overcame them. They were then challenged to find a pattern in the stories. They quickly determined that, although each of their stories was different, they indeed followed a similar pattern. At this time, the archetype of the hero and the journey is introduced

in two simple graphics entitled “The Outward Journey” and “The Inward Journey” adapted from Joseph Campbell’s work (1949) (see Figures 5 & 6). In the outward journey, the hero departs in response to a call to adventure. During the initiation stage, the dragon appears in the form of trials, tests, and sacrifices. The threatening dragon can be overcome but only through physical or spiritual deeds, often supernatural. After the dragon is slain, a transformation of consciousness occurs as the hero returns. The journey inward involves the same elements, but the hero is living in a realm of constraint of unfulfilled desire, conflict, and chaos long before the call. Sometimes, due to this constraint, it takes a long time to answer the call, if at all. The paralyzing inner dragons must be killed during the initiation. Once the dragons are slain, there is a transformation of consciousness and the hero returns—this time to the realm of freedom which we know as peace, fulfillment, centering, and self actualization.

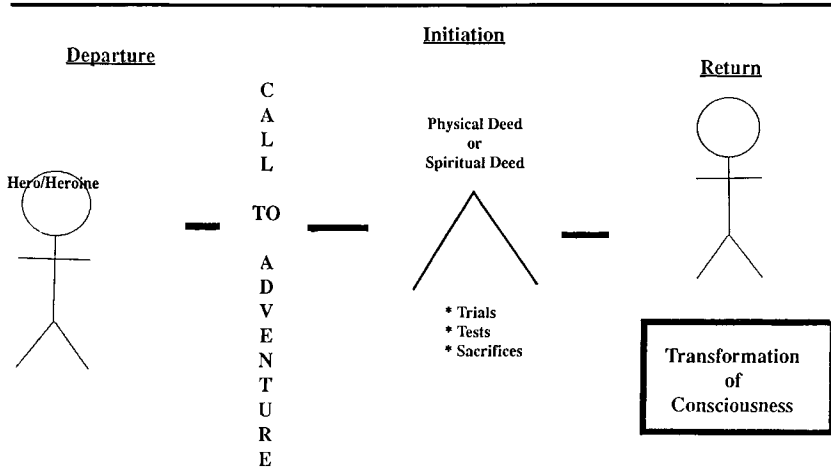


Figure 5. The journey outward

When students read and discussed *El Cid*, some were able to symbolically experience the pain that others had said they had experienced in reality. In an organized sequence of symbolic experiences, each group member’s response enriched the insight into the personal world of others. Often, due to both limited English proficiency and deep personal feeling, the students could not express emotion. The poem, however, afforded a way to express deep feeling in a socially acceptable form. When students understood the poet’s portrayal of the psychic life of a person within the poem, the bond

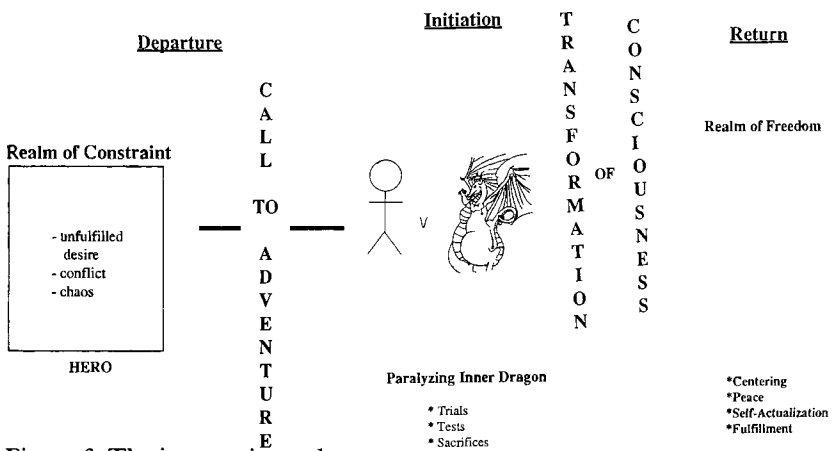


Figure 6. The journey inward

between the poem and the reader formed. The discussion of the poem, therefore, became more than a verbal exchange and the text being considered became more than a verbal message; each transcended structure to become a means to understand, enrich, and soothe the human condition. Wordsworth has defined poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth, 1982, p. 797). Often the student cannot express feelings and cannot use concrete words in the struggle to self disclose. The poet’s words, powerful in their design and impact, evoked strong emotional responses in the students. Connotations and symbolic extensions of meaning became inseparable from the work so that its consideration stimulated the group and expanded the meaning.

Students rated Emily Dickinson and Maya Angelou as their favorite poets. They pointed out that Emily Dickinson’s imagery suggests the pain of the inward journey and many found symbolic relief in the poem, “After Great Pain” through vicariously experiencing “First—Chill—then Stupor—then the letting go” (Dickinson, 1962, p. 73). When asked to comment on memorable lines, students frequently alluded to the lines,

“Alone, all alone
Nobody, but nobody
Can make it out here alone” (Angelou, 1975, p. 18)

Although the awareness, acceptance, and expressions of feelings are crucial for personal and group meaning making, many students had difficulty in clearly verbalizing these feelings. One student later shared

that, upon entering the group, she felt unique in her own despair and that she alone had fears that were unspeakable. She disclosed that she felt deep concern about her sense of self worth and her sense of relatedness. Others shared similar feelings. However, students unanimously agreed that, when secrets were shared, they realized their secrets were similar to others after all, and this understanding provided a link or a connection to the group and a possibility for universally connecting with mankind. A frequent comment made by students was that the group discussion of the different heroes and their problems gave them hope.

The transition from poetry to prose was mitigated by keeping the focus on the reader and the group interaction with the text. Major themes that students chose to explore as they emerged from discussion of the heroic journeys were: basic isolation, alienation, the recognition of one's mortality, consequences of personal choices, the capriciousness of existence, and man's fallibility.

What emerged from all the group discussions was an attitude toward mankind, toward the human condition, and toward hopefulness. Students agreed that the literature discussions helped them develop a philosophy that enabled them to see themselves from another perspective. Furthermore, they said the discussions gave them an arsenal of strategies to deal with problems and a strong desire to slay their own dragons. The interpersonal exchanges encouraged students to explore feeling, to expand their range of understanding, to discover patterns, and, for a few, to feel some fulfillment. At the least, students felt meaning making of themselves and their immigrant experience through poetry. As Frost has written: "poetry ends in a clarification of life—not necessarily a great clarification, but a momentary stay against confusion" (Leedy, 1969, p. 70).

SUMMARY

Students entered the group discussions as culture bearers, but within the group, over a period of time, changes began as students noted cultural differences and similarities. Together they interacted as culture makers and ultimately emerged as bearers of their own group culture. Their experiences indicate that: (1) no one culture produces a typical literature that reflects all of the characteristics of its people; (2) that no one book or list of books can represent a culture; and (3) that literary acculturation is not transmitting heritage as a package deal or forcing the adoption of the cultural patterns of any single group, but a process of personal and social change and choice caused by the individual's interaction with peers in a wide variety of literary experiences.

In summary, the features of the media program that assist young adults in the process of literary acculturation are:

1. A learning environment that:
 - centers on the needs of the young adult;
 - provides safety, comfort, and love;
 - values cultural diversity;
 - fosters interpersonal learning;
 - encourages learning in more than one language;
 - provides a wide variety of equal and open access activities for reading, listening, browsing, researching, collaborating, computing, telecommunicating, creating, producing, and reporting;
 - integrates all print and nonprint materials within one collection with no special sections isolated for language minority students;
 - values students individually, not as members of a group;
 - encourages oral development of language through cooperative use of multimedia resources.
2. A strong literature program that:
 - relates to students' personal experiences;
 - relates to students' interests;
 - encourages personal and collaborative meaning making in peer group discussions;
 - provides a broad contextual structure by using the archetypal journey in literature from diverse cultures;
 - targets the media specialist as a teacher and facilitator in partnership with the classroom teacher;
 - relates writing and speaking activities to literature; and
 - produces individual and group myths.
3. Technology that:
 - accommodates learning styles of visual, auditory, and tactile-kinesthetic learners;
 - encourages cooperative learning;
 - promotes inquiry;
 - promotes exploratory learning;
 - fosters creativity;
 - removes limits of linear learning modes;
 - increases productivity;
 - builds self-esteem;
 - allows students to be producers of knowledge;
 - matches learning experiences to students' preferred learning style;
 - enables interactive problem solving; and

- provides symbolic communication that is not dependent on any formal language.

The result is a new young culture-bearing group of seasoned, enthusiastic, and confident travelers who love the journey and will continue to make meaning as they read literature of their choice from widely diverse cultures.

APPENDIX A

LEARNING STYLES PREFERENCE SURVEY

PART I STUDENT PROFILE

Name _____
Grade _____ ID# _____ Gender _____
____ Asian American ____ Afro-American ____ White ____ Hispanic

- 1. Where were you born? _____
- 2. How long have you been living in the United States? _____
- 3. What is your native language? _____
- 4. What language do you speak most frequently at home? _____
- 5. What language do you most frequently speak at school? _____
- 6. Approximately, how frequently do you speak English? _____
____ All the time _____ More than 50% of the time
____ Less than 50% of the time _____ Less than 10% of the time
- 7. What language do you speak best? _____
- 8. How long have you lived in Hialeah? _____
- 9. How many schools have you attended? _____
- 10. What, if any, newspaper do you read? _____

PART II LEARNING STYLES PREFERENCE

When I go to the media center,

- 1. I look for my friends.
____ always _____ sometimes _____ never
- 2. I look for an empty private study carrel.
____ always _____ sometimes _____ never
- 3. I look and walk around before I settle down.
____ always _____ sometimes _____ never
- 4. I look for an empty lounge chair.
____ always _____ sometimes _____ never
- 5. I look for an available computer.
____ always _____ sometimes _____ never

When I have an assignment to work on in the media center,

- 6. I ask for help immediately.
____ always _____ sometimes _____ never
- 7. I read the assignment carefully and then ask for help.
____ always _____ sometimes _____ never
- 8. I figure out how to get the information I need without help.
____ always _____ sometimes _____ never

9. I decide to do it later.
 always sometimes never
10. I decide not to do it all.
 always sometimes never

In order for me to understand an assignment,

11. I need to have written instructions.
 always sometimes never
12. I need to have oral instructions.
 always sometimes never
13. I need to have both written and oral instructions.
 always sometimes never
14. I need to see an example of a completed assignment.
 always sometimes never

When I am studying,

15. I prefer to work alone.
 always sometimes never
16. I prefer to work with a tutor.
 always sometimes never
17. I prefer to work with friends.
 always sometimes never
18. I prefer absolute quiet.
 always sometimes never
19. I prefer some background noise such as music.
 always sometimes never
20. I prefer lots of background noise such as music and television.
 always sometimes never
21. I prefer to eat as I read.
 always sometimes never
22. I prefer to drink as I read.
 always sometimes never
23. I prefer text in my native language.
 always sometimes never
24. I prefer to sit in a comfortable lounge chair.
 always sometimes never
25. I prefer to stretch out on the floor.
 always sometimes never
26. I prefer bright lighting.
 always sometimes never
27. I prefer soft lighting.
 always sometimes never

When I need information,

28. I prefer to find it at a computer workstation.
 always sometimes never
29. I prefer to find it in a book.
 always sometimes never
30. I prefer to obtain it from a teacher.
 always sometimes never
31. I prefer to obtain it from a media specialist.
 always sometimes never
32. I prefer to obtain it from another student.
 always sometimes never
33. I prefer to obtain it from a videotape.
 always sometimes never
34. I prefer to obtain it from an audiotape.
 always sometimes never
35. Of the following choices, please check the one you prefer:
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> an electronic encyclopedia | <input type="checkbox"/> information from a friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> information from a computer | <input type="checkbox"/> a print encyclopedia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> paperback novel | <input type="checkbox"/> information from a book |
| <input type="checkbox"/> novel in English | <input type="checkbox"/> hardback novel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> information from television | <input type="checkbox"/> novel in Spanish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> novel on a videotape | <input type="checkbox"/> novel on audiotape |

Please list the things you like most about your media center:

Please list the things you do not like about the media center:

Please let us know what would you like to see in the media center that you think would make learning easier for you.

APPENDIX B

MEDIA CENTER INTEREST/USE SURVEY

PART I STUDENT PROFILE

Name _____
Grade _____ ID# _____ Gender _____
___ Asian American ___ Afro-American ___ White ___ Hispanic

- 1. Where were you born?
2. How long have you been living in the United States?
3. What is your native language?
4. What language do you speak most frequently at home?
5. What language do you most frequently speak at school?
6. Approximately, how frequently do you speak English?
7. What language do you speak best?
8. How long have you lived in Hialeah?
9. How many schools have you attended?
10. What, if any, newspaper do you read?

PART II INTEREST/USE

What do you think of your media center? Is it an interesting place with a wide variety of information and things to do? Do you feel welcome in the media center? The media staff needs to know your answers to these and other questions so they can design an even better program especially for you. Thank you for answering each of the following questions carefully.

- 1. How many times during the week do you come to the media center?
2. Please check the reasons why you usually come to the media center:
research, check out/return books, use computers, meet friends, quick information, read books, view videotape, listen to audiotape, telecommunicate, read magazines

3. Does the media center have the kind of books you read for pleasure?
 always sometimes never
4. Are materials current and appropriate for your needs?
 always sometimes never
5. Are the books you need available?
 always sometimes never
6. Are the materials adequate for your research and term paper needs?
 always sometimes never
7. Are materials easy to locate?
 always sometimes never
8. Did you attend an orientation class to introduce you to the media center?
 always sometimes never
9. Can you get help learning how to find and use the media center's materials?
 always sometimes never
10. Is service fast and friendly?
 always sometimes never
11. From whom do you usually get help in the media center?
 media specialists library/media clerks
 teachers friends
12. Are you satisfied with the help you receive in the media center?
 always sometimes never
13. Are you able to locate materials easily on your subject in more than one language and in more than one format?
 always sometimes never
14. Do you speak more than one language when you are in the media center?
 always sometimes never
15. Is the atmosphere in the media center warm and friendly?
 always sometimes never
16. Do you like spending time in the media center?
 always sometimes never
17. Do you enjoy reading?
 always sometimes never
18. Do you experience problems when you read in your native language?
 always sometimes never
19. Do you experience problems when you read in a second language?
 always sometimes never
20. Do you wish that the media center had more books in your native language?
 always sometimes never

21. Do you check out books written in Spanish?
 always sometimes never
22. What is the main reason you check out books written in Spanish?
 to read for pleasure
 to complete an assignment
 to share reading with brothers and/or sisters
 to share reading with parents
 to better understand the subject matter of the book
23. Do you use the computers in the media center?
 always sometimes never
24. What is the main reason you use a computer?
 word processing tutorial
 spreadsheet exploration
 database fun
 information retrieval graphics
25. Of the following choices, please check the subjects you prefer to read about:
- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biography | <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Fantasy | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History | <input type="checkbox"/> Humor | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mystery | <input type="checkbox"/> Survival | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Teenage | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> War | <input type="checkbox"/> issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Young | <input type="checkbox"/> True | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adults | <input type="checkbox"/> Crime | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psycho- | <input type="checkbox"/> New Age | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> logical | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Love | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Murder | <input type="checkbox"/> Future | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Witchcraft | <input type="checkbox"/> Animals | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frontier | <input type="checkbox"/> Tall tales | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life | <input type="checkbox"/> Indians | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vampires | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pirates | <input type="checkbox"/> Aliens | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Detectives | <input type="checkbox"/> Young | <input type="checkbox"/> Both | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suspense | <input type="checkbox"/> love | | |

NOTES

- ¹ Office of the Budget, Dade County Schools, Miami, Florida.
- ² The cadre consists of teachers, parents, students, and administrators who serve as governing members of The School Based Management/Shared Decision Making Team. Hialeah High School joined the Pilot II Program in 1988.
- ³ Each school in Dade County, Florida, is required to develop a School Improvement Plan for Project Excellence.
- ⁴ (META) Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy, Inc. has a court ordered agreement with the Florida Department of Education to guarantee development of a District Plan for Limited English Proficient Students that complies with the consent decree. Section 23.058 *Florida Statutes* and Rule 6a-0905 FAC.
- ⁵ (ESOL) English for Speakers of Other Languages includes instruction in speaking, listening to, reading, and writing English in an instructional program appropriate to the proficiency level of the students.
- ⁶ ESOL Program requires students to demonstrate independence in reading, speaking, and writing English before qualifying for placement in mainstream English classes.

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