

Hawaii International Conference on Education

Proceedings Submission

1. Title: Bilingual Electronically Mediated Mentoring
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6. Abstract:

This bilingual electronically mediated mentoring project has just completing its first of three years of funding through a Title III Teachers and Personnel grant from the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). The need for this project arose from a need to provide supplemental support to new bilingual intern teachers working in San Bernardino and Riverside counties of Southern California. These two counties combined cover over 27, 407 square miles and comprise 17.2% of the land area of the state. With few bilingual supervisors available for on-site assistance and an increasing number of English Language Learners entering the local schools an electronic mentoring system was established at California State University San Bernardino to assist new bilingual intern teachers with classroom and instructional issues in their classrooms.

The on-line electronic mentoring system utilized Black Board, an on-line interactive teaching program, to bring together experienced bilingual teachers and novice intern teachers both working in local schools. Dyads of mentor teachers and novice bilingual teachers were set up who were teaching at the same or similar grade levels i.e., k, 1-3, 4-6 etc. Each dyad or group communicated through their own discussion board where messages would be posted, responded to or new messages sent out. Through each groups discussion board mentors and mentees were free to communicate about any topic that would help the new teachers in their classrooms. Both the mentors and mentees were also able to communicate with project personnel, read project announcements, examine project documents and have access to external educational links.

This project has been functioning for the past eight months. In those eight months the project staff have observed several themes develop that have significance for electronic mentoring programs:

1) problems navigating the electronic medium, 2) traditional mentoring skills may not be sufficient for the new environment, and 3) the Yo Puedo Solo (I can do it by myself) complex. The first of these themes encompasses problems associated with getting on to Black Board and finding their way once around in the interactive environment. It was surprising that many of our participants had initial difficulty just logging on to Black Board and learning how to communicate via the group discussion boards. The second major theme that has emerged focuses on

the competencies needed to mentor through an electronic medium versus traditional face to face mentoring. Many of the mentors were recruited based on recommendations for their ability to mentor novice teachers. However, this perceived ability did not translate to on-line mentoring. What was somewhat surprising was that mentor teachers who exhibited greater familiarity with on-line technology had greater interaction and were more supportive with their mentees than teachers who were initially considered better mentors but were less familiar with technology. The third theme that has emerged from our experiences is what we have labeled as the "Yo Puedo Solo" (I can do it by myself) complex. What this concept describes is the attitude and behavior of new intern teachers to be reluctant to ask for assistance, even on-line, based on their belief that they should know it all as new teachers. We hope that the further development of these themes and future examination of the use of electronic mentoring with new bilingual teachers will add to our knowledge base of how to help empower our new teachers beyond their initial experiences as full-time teachers.