

2016 Brock International Prize in Education Nomination Portfolio

ANGELA VALENZUELA, PhD



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Director, Texas Center for Education Policy, The University Of Texas at Austin

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See complete portfolio at www.angelavalenzuela.com

Nomination Letter for Dr. Angela Valenzuela by Noelle W. Arnold

It is an honor to nominate Dr. Angela Valenzuela for the 2016 Brock International Prize in Education. Dr. Valenzuela is the Associate Vice President for University Partnerships, in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Valenzuela is a professor in both the Educational Policy and Planning Program within the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Texas at Austin, and holds a courtesy appointment in the Cultural Studies in Education Program within the Department of Curriculum & Instruction. Dr. Valenzuela serves as the Director of both the Texas Center for Education Policy (TCEP) and the National Latino/a Education Research and Policy Project (NLERAP) at the University of Texas at Austin and Co-Director of the Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Valenzuela secured \$700,000 in funding from the Ford Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation to support the NLERAP which has served as a teacher education pipeline for Latino/a youth in five cities in five states as follows: Sacramento, California; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Chicago, IL, Brooklyn, New York, and Dallas, Texas. Nationally, Dr. Valenzuela's work has broad application for curriculum and instruction, educational leadership and policy, public policy, psychology, philosophy, sociology, history, and ethnic studies, to name a few.

Dr. Valenzuela is one of the founders and conveners of *The Forum for Education and Democracy* comprised of leaders in the fields of school reform, educational policy, and advocacy for equitable access to quality schools for all American families. Some of the conveners are preeminent scholars such as former Brock Laureates Gloria Ladson-Billings and Linda Darling-Hammond, and others such as John Goodlad, Pedro Noguera, and Carl Glickman. Dr. Valenzuela's research and teaching interests are in the sociology of education, minority youth in schools, educational policy, and urban education reform. She is also a fellow of the National Education Policy Center and is considered an expert by the center in multilingual and multicultural issues in education. Other organizations similar to the Brock Foundation have lauded Dr. Valenzuela and her work. Since 1981, Dr. Valenzuela has won 40 national and international awards. Some notables are:

- American Educational Research Association Member at Large for the Executive Council
- League of United Latin American Citizens Scholar Honoree Award
- Austin American Statesman Award
- Texas Chamber of Commerce Women of Distinction Award

Dr. Valenzuela as one of my personal scholar-icons and I could not think of anyone more deserving. It is very rare that you find a scholar that lives what she writes about and advocates beyond the confines of academia. Most importantly, is the way you feel having been in her presence. She would describe this as care; I can only describe this as love. Love of people, love of community, and love of scholarship. She sees the individuals in the cause and it is this respect for humanity that makes her such a powerful and innovative advocate and scholar. She is both a passionate and humble advocate for students and communities, the impact of which has been felt broadly. I am sure that this letter and my writing could not possibly describe who she is and what she means to education and communities at large. As one former student states:

Dr. V is simply an amazing scholar and activist. But what has always struck me Dr. Valenzuela has been sought for her expertise by major educational organizations and Departments of Education at the state and federal level both in the US and abroad.

Another states

I am going to take the time to brag about an awesome college professor Angela Valenzuela at the University of Texas, although she represents many committed college professors around the country whose stories seem to get lost in negativity of higher education. Like K-12, sometimes I think I am living on another planet when I see dedicated and hard-working teachers get vilified by policy-makers, politicians, foundations, reformers--you name it. But I am working with one of Dr. Valenzuela's students who is a senior at UT, was a DC intern as part of The Archer Center semester internship program, and has now returned to UT to finish his BA. Long distance, I am working with him to find his next career step in DC--and Dr. Valenzuela has made this task totally enjoyable. He tells the story of how she helped to shape his academics, his values, his work ethics, and the special attention that she provided. This is how the village should work, and this is one university professor who clearly prepared this student for life, as well as a career, and built on the caring and performance of his school district. When this happens, our nation benefits.

Dr. Angela Valenzuela has devoted over 25 years in fostering equity and inclusion for all students. Dr. Valenzuela has over 70 publications, including three books. She has over 70 scholarly presentations and over 90 public invited lectures. Dr. Valenzuela's book *Subtractive Schooling: U. S. Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring* still stands as one of the definitive books on schooling for children in border towns and Latino students, in general, and was endorsed by leading journal editors of *Harvard Educational Review*, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, and *Qualitative Studies in Education*; and eminent scholars, William Ayers, and Nel Noddings. According to the *Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*,

"...every government representative, whether at the local, state, or federal level, including the President of the United States, should read this book. Maybe then subtractive schooling would be seen for what it is really worth by people who have the power to 'subtract' it from American society, and to replace it with policies of bilingualism and biculturalism."

This book was the winner of the 2000 American Educational Research Association Outstanding Book Award; honorable mention from the Gustavus Myers Outstanding Book Awards 2000; and the 2001 American Educational Studies Association Critics' Choice Award. In addition, *Subtractive Schooling* has almost 2000 citations since it was written in 1999 and remains a bestseller for SUNY Press. In addition, *Subtractive Schooling* is a staple in many university classrooms.

Dr. Valenzuela's last book *Leaving Children Behind How "Texas-style" Accountability Fails Latino Youth* has been endorsed by former Brock Prize recipient, Gary Orfield, Professor in the UCLA Graduate School of Education and the Co-Director, The Civil Rights Project at UCLA; Michael Apple John Bascom Professor of Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; and *Rethinking Schools*, a leading nonprofit publisher and advocacy organization dedicated to sustaining and strengthening public education through social justice teaching and education activism. Dr. Valenzuela's book-in-press, *Growing Critically Conscious Teachers for Latino/a Youth: A Grounded Social Justice Approach* (Teachers College Press) promises to be another groundbreaking book in the area of critical Latino studies in education.

It is impossible to capture in this nomination letter what I believe is truly the core of Dr. Valenzuela's educational contribution, and impact on educational practice and understanding: her critical advocacy efforts. In her CV, she has documented over 50 community service activities and has given over 40 media presentations and expert testimonies to legislative and education agencies. Dr. Valenzuela has spoken at the Forum for Education and Democracy, held at the Library of Congress, policy-briefing on behalf of equitable and fair educational practices. She also testified on behalf of plaintiffs (represented by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund [MALDEF] in a federal court trial, *GI Forum et al. v. Texas Education Agency et al.* (2000). Moreover, D. Valenzuela, through her Texas Center in Educational Policy, helped to craft the House resolution that passed in the last legislative session (HR 775).

In addition, Dr. Valenzuela has been intimately involved in issues of deportation of undocumented parents and the separation from their U.S.-citizen children. Dr. Valenzuela serves as the faculty sponsor of the University Leadership Initiative (ULI) at the University of Texas at Austin. This is an organization that with undocumented immigrant students was first developed around House Bill 1403 in Texas that was successfully signed by Texas Gov. Rick Perry and created the state's first out-of-state tuition-waiver that now 22 other states have, and that has ultimately culminated in the Dream Act. Dr. Valenzuela worked on this bill from the very beginning and was the very first person and scholar to testify on its behalf in the Higher Education Committee in the Texas House in 2001. Dr. Valenzuela drew on her research in *Subtractive Schooling* to suggest why this legislation was necessary. According to Dr. Valenzuela, "I am very proud of our students and what they have done. They have ignited a movement that continues in a very sophisticated and committed manner into the present."

One of the most recent and significant contributions for Dr. Valenzuela is helping to spearhead a community-based initiative on behalf of the Austin Independent School District that involves the development of model legislation that would create a consortium of schools within the district that would get relieved of their having to take many standardized tests, on the one hand, and would in turn implement a research-based, project-based assessment system modeled after the highly successful member schools of the New York Performance Standards Consortium. Moreover, she is researching, writing, and making presentations with her graduate students with the idea of generating a publication in time for the next legislative session. If the bill gets signed by Texas' next governor, they plan to ask their commissioner of education to request a waiver from the federal government from NCLB testing requirements for AISD schools selected as part of the consortium. This bill will not eliminate accountability since some testing is always required, but rather how these tests are used in a high-stakes manner. Dr. Valenzuela also created the Graduate Seminar in Educational Policy in the Texas State Capitol with UT-Austin Graduate students. This yielded the creation of a policy brief that was argued by students and faculty before the Texas State Senate Committee on Education in March 2015.

Some of this discussion appears in her just published "*Lead the Change Series*" interview that is included in her portfolio by the AERA Educational Change Special Interest Group (Issue No. 42, September 2014). Her portfolio further includes the Series editor's noteworthy reaction to her interview: "Muchas, muchas gracias for one of the most inspiring interviews I've had so far - in our history of over 40 issues!"

Arguably, the very filing of this model legislation will be monumental. Should the other details fall into place, AISD will, in effect, inaugurate a different approach to assessment for Texas and

the nation, opting for a model that is authentic, formative, and project based. .For anyone following this story, this is indeed a move that could change the face of how those in the educational community assess students in Texas and nationwide.

Also of significance, is the work Dr. Valenzuela has done to provide counter-narratives and to dispel stereotypes and myths regarding the racial history and contemporary issues of Latinos and other communities of color. Her blog, *Educational Equity, Politics & Policy in Texas*, contains posts on accountability, testing, college readiness, dropouts, bilingual education, immigration, school finance, race, class, and gender issues with additional focus at the national level. Her blog receives between 350 and 400 “hits” per day nationally and internationally and has 539,821 views to date. Aside from the U.S., she regularly gets visitors to the site from across the world, including Ukraine, Turkey, France, Germany, Russia, China, Moldova, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Dr. Valenzuela’s impact she is consistently having in practitioner circles though curriculum development. This is something that scholars often lose once they join the academy. However. Dr. Valenzuela is still in schools and communities. Dr. Valenzuela founded a community-based organization, Nuestro Grupo (which literally means, “Our Group” in Spanish), to which she also belongs and serves as chair. Nuestro Grupo’s key initiative is the establishment of Academia Cuauhtli/Eagle Academy Saturday School at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Culture Center (ESB-MACC) serving 35 fourth-grade, Title I, Austin Independent School District (AISD) students with an opening inaugural date of January 10, 2015. Dr. Valenzuela created the Mexican American Studies curriculum in the areas of migration history civil rights and local history-particularly the Tejano Movement. Moreover, this curriculum is currently taught in AISD in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 11. This work has provided a model for the state. According to Dr. Valenzuela, “As someone who is worked in policy for some many years, I have come to truly appreciate the value of working in and with our local community to accomplish things like this that no policy edict could ever hope for. It is also humbling.”

In addition, because of her longstanding commitment to racial justice and human rights and interdisciplinary impact, I asked Dr. Valenzuela to serve as a 2014 keynote speaker for the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), the leading consortium in educational leadership and policy. The theme for the conference was *Education for Racial Justice and Human Rights*. In Dr. Valenzuela’s own words from her book *Subtractive Schooling*,

“An authentically caring pedagogy would not only cease subtracting students’ cultural identities, it would also reverse its effects. It would build bridges wherever there are divisions” (p. 266).

Until we get there, I am grateful for the work of Angela Valenzuela.