Language, Life and Learning in Laredo

In August 2008, the International Conference on Language, Life and Learning took place at the Texas A&M International University in Laredo. Hundreds of participants came to the campus to enjoy two days of inspiring speakers, workshops, food and friends. It was a time to prepare for the upcoming year of teaching and administering school programs, but there were plenty of opportunities for networking and for reconnecting with friends and colleagues one hadn’t seen in a while.

The presentations were very diverse, as were the presenters. There were strands of workshops available for teachers and administrators. The topics ranged from early childhood, the arts, sports and fitness to administering a dual-language school. Some presenters were university faculty and experts in their field, but many were teachers and administrators with something important to share with their colleagues. Every session was geared toward maximizing the professional development of the participants. All in all, the conference proved to be a great way to kick off the new school year.

In this issue of the JBER you will find some of the papers submitted by conference presenters. The topics range from issues in K-12 education to concerns in higher education. You will also discover that many of the articles focus on the English language learner (particularly Spanish speakers) and bilingual and dual-language instruction. These are important topics that need to be continually thrust into the foreground of our ongoing discussions regarding school improvements, literacy learning, and standardized testing. Understanding the needs of ELL students and the challenges faced by bilingual educators is the key to making informed decisions and in advocating for appropriate education policy.

It is my hope that this issue of the JBER will inspire you to advocate for or even create positive changes in your classroom, school, or perhaps your district. May be next year you’ll have something to present at our International Conference on Language, Life and Learning 2009. I’ll see you there!

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