

The Collaborative Advocacy Work of Language Teachers

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Abstract : This paper examines the collaborative forms of advocacy that a group of four public school teachers took for their emergent bilingual students in one public school district. While teacher advocacy takes many forms in and out of the classroom, much advocacy work is done by individuals and less by collective action. As a result, individual teachers risk isolation or marginalization in their school contexts when they advocate for immigrant youth. This paper is intended to contribute to the documentation and understanding of teachers' advocacy work as a collaborative act in teacher education research. The increase of ELs in US classrooms and a corresponding lack of teacher preparation to meet the needs of ELs has motivated the training of educators in linguistically responsive education (e.g., ESL, sheltered English instruction [SEI], bilingual education). Drawing from educational theories of linguistically responsive teaching for preparing educators, we trace the linguistically responsive advocacy work of the teachers. The paper is a multiple case study that tracks how teachers' discussions on advocacy during a teacher preparation program leading to collaborative actions in their daily teaching lives in and out of school. Data collected includes online discussion forums on the topic of advocacy, course assignments on the topic of advocacy, video-audio recordings of classroom teaching observations, and video-audio recordings of individual and focus group interviews. The findings demonstrate that the teachers' understanding of advocacy developed through collaborative partnerships formed in the teacher preparation program and grew into active forms of collaborative advocacy in their teaching practice in and out of school. The teachers formed multi-level and collaborative partnerships with teachers, families, community members, policymakers from the local government, and educational researchers to advocate for their emergent bilingual students by planning advocacy events such as new family orientations for emergent bilinguals, professional development for general education teachers on the topic of linguistically responsive instruction, and family nights hosted by the district. The paper's findings present types of advocacy work in which teachers engage (pedagogical, curricular, out-of-school work) and provide evidence of collaborative advocacy work by a group of engaged educators. The paper highlights the increased agency and effective advocacy of teachers through teacher education and collaborative partnerships and suggests a need for more research on collaborative forms of teacher advocacy for emergent bilinguals.

Keywords : language education, teacher advocacy, language instruction, teacher education

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