



KATESOL/BE Press Release

(Friday, December 9, 2005, Manhattan, Kansas) Schools have long been considered the great institutional gatekeepers of dreams. Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, upon entering school, are told that education is the great equalizer and with a strong education, they can have access to and fulfill “the American dream.” However, long-standing cultures within the school system have evolved that place limitations on the ways in which educational success is to be achieved, particularly for CLD students. Zach Rubio has confronted one such limitation through his suspension for speaking Spanish at Endeavor Alternative School in Kansas City, Kansas.

In ignoring Zach Rubio’s bilingual and bicultural background, the educators at Endeavor Alternative School tragically failed to recognize that Zach’s singular identity is intertwined with his ability to speak both Spanish and English. From a cultural-historical perspective it is critical to recognize that a child’s language, culture, family and community have an equal impact on the potential for educational success. According to Reyes and Halcón (2001), one of the reasons for the high drop-out rate among CLD students in middle and high school is that the majority of educators and researchers ignore the bicultural background of CLD students and their potential for bilingualism and biliteracy as if these are inconsequential, useless appendages in the process of becoming literate.

However, as in the case of Zach Rubio, it is critical that educators begin to consider the bicultural background of this population in order to “open the gates” and provide these students with equal opportunities to become literate and active members of the classroom. As an organization, we at KATESOL envision collaborative efforts among educators through the KATESOL/BE network to advocate for the rights and needs of CLD learners. To achieve this goal, we call upon educators across the state of Kansas to step outside their traditional roles toward purposive activism for student and family rights and the appropriateness of quality programs. By supporting Zach Rubio and his family in the fight for equal rights and the opportunity to speak his native language in school, we hope to engage educators in a deeper level of reform that supports, recognizes and celebrates all of our CLD students’ rights to speak their native languages in school.”

Signed,
Dr. Della Perez, KATESOL President

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