

Berta
Gonzalez

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BERTA GONZALEZ

Associate Professor of Education

The migrant farmworker lifestyle was an integral part of Berta Gonzalez's early upbringing as she and her family traveled between Texas and California working in the agricultural fields. Knowing through her personal and professional experience that education is one key to a better life for many people, Dr. Gonzalez nowadays trains students to become future elementary and secondary school teachers.

Acknowledging the supportive role of her mother, Gonzalez says, "I certainly know that without my mother's constant encouragement for me to continue in my education, I would still be a part of the migrant field hands in this country. The contribution that my family [two brothers, three sisters] now makes to society in our various professional roles [nursing, education, psychology, and staff development] is with a strong recognition and value of our early migrant upbringing."

Gonzalez's long-standing commitment to educational issues and equal opportunities for Hispanics, limited-English-speaking persons, and youth in general shows in her expertise, awareness, and sensitivity in training future teachers. A few years ago, her college students presented a plaque to her that reads: "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires!" And, because of Gonzalez's enthusiastic teaching and cultural and educational experiences, many of her teacher education students view her as a role model.

Dr. Gonzalez, an associate professor of education, graduated from Sanger High School in the San Joaquin Valley. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree at California State University, Fresno and her Master of Arts degree at California State University, Chico. She was awarded her Doctorate in Education from the University of the Pacific in Stockton in 1979.

Gonzalez has taught at every grade level from pre-school to university, which also includes returning early in her teaching career to her hometown of Sanger to teach at an elementary school. After leaving the Sanger schools, Gonzalez was hired as the coordinator of the California Mini Corps Program at California State University, Chico, where she also taught in the Department of Teacher Education. The Mini Corps Program focused on preparing former migrant students to become elementary and secondary school teachers. Later, as director of bilingual education programs at Fresno Pacific College, she taught for eight years at the undergraduate and graduate level. She has also directed state and federally funded programs with Fresno County's Department of Education. Among her numerous professional awards, Gonzalez was named one of the "Outstanding Young Women in America" and last year received recognition as an "Outstanding Educator" from the Sanger community.

At CSU, Fresno, Gonzalez's current work is multifaceted. She is associate professor of elementary curriculum and coordinator of Clinical Supervision Training Institutes for Master Teachers. In addition, she directs the Master Teacher Scholarship Program. During her summer vacation from the



university, however, she usually makes it a point to go back to the elementary or secondary classroom or to pursue her own professional development. In recent summers, she has worked as an elementary school teacher in Parlier and as school principal in Firebaugh. This past summer at Yale University, she enrolled in post-doctoral coursework that focused on critical thinking skills. "I do believe that as a teacher trainer I must stay in touch with the reality of the classroom and current research because education is a life-long learning process," Gonzalez says.

What do you see as your specific role in preparing new teachers?

I view myself as a person who imparts knowledge about educational theory and practice as it relates to the elementary classroom. I expect my students to be clear in defining their views about educational issues discussed in class. We live in a changing society, and I believe that our new teachers will be the builders, movers, and agents for positive educational change in our communities. We are constantly improving, molding, and developing human potential in our prospective teachers. Teaching is a very demanding profession that requires current expertise in the curricular content, enthusiasm, patience, stamina, and good listening skills. As a professor preparing new teachers, I must share these concepts and classroom realities with students pursuing teaching as their chosen profession.