

## **THE MARCH TO THE MAILBOX**

Let me give you an example to show how culturally relevant pedagogy works, and why it works for all students.

A teacher in a low-income school once told me about her struggle with that age-old task: teaching students to write a business letter. Her textbook offered what sounded like some pretty good advice for making this task relevant to students. Bring a toy catalog to class, it said, and let students write letters placing an order for a Game Boy or other item.

The teacher tried to picture this working with her students. Who orders catalog items with a business letter these days? She decided that this exercise, so seemingly good in theory, would seem completely pointless to her students.

So she found another, more appropriate task. She told her students they were going to write letters to the mayor, asking for changes that would make life better in their neighborhoods. She told students not to rely solely on their own perspectives: they should go into the community and ask relatives, neighbors and church leaders about the problems in the community. The students did their research — learning about their community and strengthening their bonds with family — and wrote their letters. The teacher held a “march to the mailbox,” mailing their letters with great ceremony. Not long afterward, the mayor was on the phone with the principal, asking when he could visit the class and address their concerns in person.