



October 4, 2000

Letter of Recommendation for Ilda Carreiro King

It is my extreme pleasure to write this letter for Dr. King in nomination of her for the year 2000 outstanding dissertation award for her 1999 dissertation, *Learner-centeredness in middle school, inclusion classrooms: Perceptions of teachers and their students*. I have known Ilda professionally and personally for over four years and she has been particularly instrumental in furthering the work I am doing with both the American Psychological Association's (APA) Division 15 (Educational Psychology) and Education Directorate concerning the *Learner-Centered Psychological Principles*. Ilda initiated leading edge research in her dissertation on the application of the *Principles* to educational practice in general and to inclusion classrooms for special education students in particular.

Specifically, Ilda's dissertation research used our learner-centered self-assessment tools for teachers and students to explore the question of how "learner-centered" middle school inclusion classrooms were from the perspectives of regular and special education students and their teachers. She studied 657 students at five middle schools and found, as expected, that students with special needs perceived teachers to engage in fewer practices that encouraged higher order thinking, honored their voice, and provided personal challenge than their peers. Both regular and special needs student groups noted high level of teacher caring and low levels of practices that adapted to their individual differences. In addition, both groups of students had higher levels of motivation and achievement with teachers they perceived as learner-centered versus non learner-centered. Also as expected, however, special needs students have lower motivation and achievement than their peers. Thus, her findings have furthered our understanding of what "learner-centered" means for special education versus regular students and what changes in practice are necessary to more adequately meet the learning and motivational needs of both groups of students. These changes in practice also have important implications for pre- and in-service teacher development and for the depth of knowledge they need from the field of educational psychology.

Ilda has also collaborated with me on an APA symposium in which her dissertation was presented as one of several presentations in which research collaborators and I presented results of our research with the learner-centered self-assessment tools based on the *Principles* that have now been used with over 20,000 students and their teachers in K-16 populations. In this context, she suggested highly creative ways that special needs students and teachers could use the self-assessment tools as guides to refining practices in directions that more adequately meet their learning and motivational needs. Ilda and I have continued to work together to refine our thinking on the best strategies for both meeting the needs of special education students and providing the training that teachers need to more effectively meet diverse needs in keeping with the learner-centered principles and model. In all of these collaborations, Ilda has demonstrated

not only excellent research skills, but has also shown herself to be highly creative, involved with, and knowledgeable about current educational reform initiatives impacting the quality of teaching and learning for both regular and special needs students.

I have found Ilda to not only be highly creative and a visionary leader in her field, but I also find her to be highly personable, collegial, and knowledgeable about a range of topics that encompass instruction, assessment, and evaluation. For one with so recent a Ph.D, she has not only been active as a professional and scholar in the field of educational psychology, but has also shown leadership in working with teachers and administrators to help them integrate the psychological knowledge base into their teaching and learning roles in schools and districts. Her current research has focused on bringing the psychological knowledge base on learners and learning into the educational reform agenda, forming meaningful relationships with higher education and school districts, and meeting the diverse needs of students in K-12 as well as higher education. Ilda is committed to excellence in research and in leadership directed at changing educational practices to more effectively apply the best of what we learn from psychological research to educational practice. One of her goals is to provide experiences in teaching and learning that build on current research and contribute to improved learning and achievement for all learners. She is a well-respected researcher and staff developer and from my first-hand observations of her presentations at professional meetings, I know Ilda to have an excellent presentation style that is consistent with the knowledge base on teaching and learning.

Based on Dr. King's professional leadership in and contribution of her dissertation to the field, I strongly support her as a recipient of the Annual Dissertation Award of Division 15. I believe the quality of her dissertation as well as her background and experience in classroom research qualify her for this recognition for the year 2000 outstanding dissertation award. Particularly noteworthy is her ability to contribute to both theory and practice in meaningful ways.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to call me at (303) 871-4245.

Sincerely,



Barbara L. McCombs, Ph.D.
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