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Except from:

Wink, J. (2004, 3/e, pp.51-52) *Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the REAL WORLD*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

## **Problem Posing**

*Problem posing* is much more than just a method or a series of methods. Problem posing ignites praxis and leads to action. Problem posing brings interactive participation and critical inquiry into the existing curriculum and expands it to reflect the curriculum of the students' lives. The learning is not just grounded in the prepared syllabus, the established, prescribed curriculum. Problem posing opens the door to ask questions and seeking answers, not only of the visible curriculum, but also of the hidden curriculum. Problem posing is very interested in the hidden curriculum, which is why many are uncomfortable with it. Problem posing causes people to ask questions that many do not want to hear. For example, in the following description of a family meeting, there is problem solving, which brings about a feel-good sensation, and there is problem posing, which causes some to feel uncomfortable. Both problem solving and problem posing are occurring simultaneously with very different consequences. This family meeting took place in the school of Rainey and Carmen, whom you have previously met.

The problem to be solved was that parents had stopped coming to the family meetings. Families felt alienated, teachers blamed them for not attending, and the state agency was asking why families were not involved in the education of their children. The problem for the district was to get the families involved. They needed to solve this problem, or state funds would be cut. The school had a new principal who actively worked with Carmen, Rainey, and all the teachers to find ways to make the families feel more welcome and more involved. At this point, only Carmen was making visits to the students' homes. Soon, the principal started making visits with Carmen; eventually, she felt confident enough with her limited Spanish to make the visits alone. The families, of course, responded very positively. Other teachers began to visit the homes instead of sending messages home telling the parents to come to school. Soon, the teachers thought there was reason to believe that they could have a family meeting and the families would come. The first meeting was scheduled. Invitations were sent to the families in their language; a door prize was offered; and the children were prepared to share during part of the meeting, which was scheduled to be held in the school auditorium.

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The parents arrived and sat in the back rows. The teachers arrived and sat in the front row. Three empty rows of auditorium seats separated the parents and the teachers. The parents were welcomed by one of the teachers, and the children performed. A guest speaker from the state agency spoke to the families about the importance of their involvement in the education of their children. Her presentation to the parents was articulate and forceful. She encouraged the parents to turn off the TV and talk with their children. She explained to the parents that what they teach at home is as valuable as what is taught in school. She followed this by talking about the transferal nature of language: What the kids know in Spanish, they will know in English too. I could see the parents nodding their heads in agreement. She encouraged the parents to ask questions, and not just who, what, and where, but also, why.

The meeting lasted a little more than an hour. When it was over, the parents began to gather their tired children. Among the teachers in the first row, there was general agreement that the meeting had been a success. They had solved their problem. The families came.

Why did I seem to be the only one who was disappointed? Very little meaningful interaction had taken place between the parents and the teachers. No one had asked the parents how they felt, what they needed, what their concerns were. The entire evening had been a monologue; the families had been talked at. I had hoped for a dialogue.

However, not all problems are so easily solved. Sometimes, problem posing spins off of problem solving. As the teachers were smiling among themselves and the parents were beginning to gather their children, an older man, who looked more like a grandfather than a parent, stood up and faced the stage of the auditorium. Very seriously and respectfully, he asked all of those in the front of the auditorium,

"¿Por qué enseña a los niños en una lengua que no entienden, y entonces los retienen?"

["Why do you teach our children in a language that they don't understand, and then flunk them?"]

Silence hung in the room. No one answered him. Everyone silently left the auditorium. This is problem posing, as opposed to problem solving. The man had questioned the established processes, which were obviously failing. The children were not learning, and the state agency wanted to know why. So did this man. This was a real problem, based on his lived experiences, which mattered to his family. He posed the problem, and many in the room came to understand that it is sometimes easier to solve problems than to pose problems.