Fox, K. (January 2014). Exploring neighborhood literacy: Increasing teachers’ understanding of literacy access through community mapping. *Journal of Praxis in Multicultural Education*(8) 2. Available at <http://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1071&context=jpme>

Summary: No one disputes that most teachers enter the profession with

the hope of making a difference in the lives of children, particularly

children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and limited educational

resources. What is not clear is how a teacher determines what resources

are available and what really happens in the homes and communities of

their students. This is particularly true for teachers who live in different

communities, both geographically and culturally, from the students they

teach (Neuman & Celano, 2001; Jiménez, Smith, & Teague, 2009). This

article documents teachers who bridged the divide by entering into the

homes, neighborhoods, community centers and other support agencies of

the children they teach. The purposeful mapping of the community led

participants to develop a greater understanding of resources--often unseen

by the schools--that actively supported children’s learning, such as a

church that offered homework support, a community center that offered

structured tutoring in literacy, and a grocery store with a “book nook” with

a wide selection of picture and activity books. The project also revealed

gaps, such as the restrictive library hours, that seemed to cater to senior

citizens rather than families with school age children and the absence of

literature for pre-teens and young adults and very restrictive public library

hours in some areas. Knowledge translated to advocacy—measures were

explored of how better to inform teachers of the support services that do

exist and how to value these services in the schools.