



# Family Engagement and the Growth of Literacy in Underserved Communities

—by GLORIA CANADA

*The foundation for increasing literacy in low-income, at-risk communities begins with the practice of building relationships with students and their families. Through the lens of compassion, dignity, and respect, the confidence and power of literacy and learning are ignited in underserved communities.*

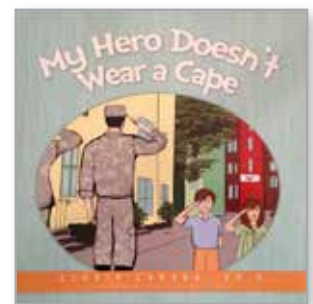


## LITERACY CHAMPION: GLORIA CANADA

Dr. Gloria Canada's career in education spans the gamut from her experiences as an elementary and middle school teacher, school principal, adjunct professor in educational leadership, and educational consultant. Family engagement, school leadership, and poverty awareness are three areas in which she is deeply passionate. Dr. Canada believes that being "intentionally aware" of the needs of children and families of poverty leads to greater family engagement with the school community as well as the growth of literacy.

Her story begins with her grandparents who emigrated here from Mexico with only elementary school educations. They sold homemade tortillas, took in people's washing and ironing, and learned the trade of construction to ensure their children could stay in school and learn. Her personal insight comes from being a first-hand witness to how literacy and learning can change lives.

Gloria's pride in growing up in a military family inspired her to write her children's book, *My Hero Doesn't Wear a Cape*. She was invited to share a reading of her book at a national meeting of Gold Star Families.



## One to Know: See the Invisible

In communities of poverty, there is often a sense of having little voice and no power. It is our responsibility, as educators, to be aware of the “invisible barriers” on campuses that may contribute to this feeling of helplessness. The power of education and literacy grows when we learn to knock down barriers and invite families to become active participants in their child’s education.

Breaking down barriers includes honest conversation among educators—conversations that literally open eyes and focus on “seeing” the invisible trauma of poverty.

Consider the importance of the following in targeting literacy:

- **Family Engagement:** Building Relationships and Outreach
- **Title I Schools:** Operating through Poverty Awareness
- **Increasing Student Success:** Inclusive School Leadership

## What to Do: Create a “Family Room” at School

Want to encourage your families to become an active and supportive part of your school? An empty classroom can easily be transformed into a warm and welcoming place for parents to gather, socialize, participate, and support their child’s learning. Open the doors and embrace the parents. They will come!

## More to Know and Do

- Ask for furniture and home-good donations from teachers and the community for the “Family Room.”
- Provide faculty training in poverty awareness.
- Make home visits routine.
- Create “Make and Take” activities for parents to support learning at home.
- Provide classes for parents on campus.
- Celebrate achievements often.

## How to Reach Gloria Canada

Gloria Canada is available to work with school districts, administrators, teachers, and parents seeking school improvement support in school leadership, poverty awareness, and parent engagement.

Dr. Canada’s book, *My Hero Doesn’t Wear a Cape*, is available for purchase on Amazon.

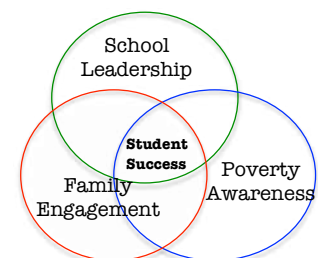
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