



September 19, 2011

312 Peabody Hall
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701

Dear Sponsor:

Thank you for considering a donation to the Rogers High School *Cruzando Fronteras* Poetry Slam on October 14, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. at the Rogers HS Auditorium. This event is funded by an Arkansas Humanities Council (AHC) R.E.A.C.H. (Raising Education and Achievement in the Humanities) Grant awarded to Ms. Jessica Fay Sliger and Dr. Freddie Bowles to help heritage speakers of Spanish gain literacy skills in both their home language of Spanish and the target language of English through a poetry unit with the theme of identity.

Rogers School District has experienced a sharp increase in the number of Hispanic/Latino Learners. Many of these learners are English Language Learners, but many are also lacking literacy skills in their first language of Spanish. In order to increase the literacy level of these students in both English and Spanish, classes for Spanish for Native Speakers are offered for students at the secondary level. Research shows that this special group of students "may have difficulty communicating about more complex topics, such as politics, literature, or careers, and with the mechanics of Spanish writing, such as spelling, syntax, and use of accents" (Hancock, 2002, p. 1). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2011) reported that Hispanics have the highest high school dropout rate of any demographic group in 2008 with almost 20% of students leaving school.

The *Cruzando Fronteras* project aims to engage and motivate heritage speakers of Spanish while increasing their literacy skills and promoting retention and graduation. Ms. Sliger will use this event to help students prepare resumes to encourage them to prepare for long range goals of employment and higher education.

The month-long unit culminates with students competing in a poetry slam at Rogers High School. This is the second Spanish-language slam that Jessica and I have organized through another AHC grant in 2010. Several of last year's students were published in two state journals and one will receive a state award at the Arkansas Curriculum Conference in November.

Ms. Sliger and I appreciate your consideration for financial support for the second RHS *Cruzando Fronteras* Poetry Slam. Your contribution will be acknowledged in the program.

Sincerely,

Freddie A. Bowles, Ph.D.