Voices for hope. Voices for change. Voices for our children.

ONE IN FOUR public school students in the U.S. now speaks a language other than English at home, and the number of emergent bilingual and immigrant children in our schools continues to grow daily. What does it mean to be a teacher today, when students are more diverse in language, culture, race, and social class than ever before? What does it take to thrive, when the demands of teaching have never been greater? Sonia Nieto found and interviewed 22 teachers of varying backgrounds and school settings who help answer the question of what effective, culturally responsive teaching looks like in the real world. Their stories of success, failure, frustration and hope will resonate with everyone who has struggled to meet the needs of diverse students in our current sociopolitical context.

“While no check-list of attitudes, dispositions, behaviors, or actions can define what thriving teachers look like, the teachers interviewed here give us powerful examples of what it takes to face their profession with courage, their content with enthusiasm, and their students with love.”

—Sonia Nieto

grades K-12 / 978-0-325-02715-9 / 2013 / 196pp / $22.00
“Sonia Nieto has done it again. Another discerning work on the challenges teachers face when they confront the status quo, and the joy they find in working with young people who are often viewed as ‘the other’ by the mainstream of society. The book presents a grim view of the mindless uniformity imposed upon our schools by standardized curricula. But the voices of the teachers leave us with a sense of hope that, if we cannot change the world, each of us can at least change a piece of it for children we respect and love.”

—Jonathan Kozol

“Sonia Nieto reminds us in this beautifully written book that powerful instruction is happening all around us and that we need to look to our classrooms and our thriving teachers for guidance and direction. While honoring the voices of practicing educators, Nieto offers an inspiring and informative model of humane, engaging, and socially just teaching for today’s diverse classrooms. I came away feeling more energized and committed than ever to do better for our children. This book is an instant classic in my educational library and I plan to use it widely in my work with pre-service and practicing teachers.”

—Ernest Morrell, Director, Institute for Urban and Minority Education (IUME) and President-elect, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

“In a political context where teachers’ work gets systematically derogated and demonized, this text is a refreshing and stirring call to prospective and actual teachers everywhere to a renewed understanding of teaching as a thoroughly ethical, political, humanistic, and social justice endeavor. Sonia Nieto’s clear, informative, and courageous voice inspires the thought that culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy is that rock upon which a loving, caring, and effective practice can be built. Kudos for immensely important work at a critical time in our nation’s history.”

—Angela Valenzuela, Professor, University of Texas College of Education and author of Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring

Sonia Nieto is Professor Emerita of Language, Literacy, and Culture, School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She has taught students from elementary school through doctoral studies, and her research has focused on multicultural education, teacher education, and the education of Latinos, immigrants, and other students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.