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AUTHOR: Sheri Bielma

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IN EDUCATION.

Elizabeth Garza
PROJECT COMMITTEE CHAIR

[SIGNATURE]

[DATE]

Jamie Gurken
PROJECT COMMITTEE MEMBER

[SIGNATURE]

[DATE]
Establishing a Dialogic Reading Curriculum for Mexican Immigrant Parents of Preschoolers

Sheri Ann Bielma

California State University San Marcos
PROJECT ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to explore effective ways of reaching Mexican immigrant parents in developing emergent literacy skills in their preschool age children at home. The project addressed the key problem that little curriculum exists that is specifically designed to support Mexican immigrant parents in home literacy practices. The resulting curriculum for educators provided three workshops and two coaching sessions for Mexican immigrant parents. The first workshop provided parents with an understanding of the need for literacy interactions at home during the preschool years in light of kindergarten Common Core Standards and current literacy research. The subsequent workshops taught the process of dialogic reading and were supported with follow up coaching sessions. The project is significant because it provided a resource specifically for Mexican immigrant parents that involves them in their children’s literacy education. Few resources existed in the community that empowered parents in this manner. The project contributes to current outreach to families regarding early literacy education. It also contributes to helping families of English Language Learners.

KEYWORDS: dialogic reading, early childhood development, English Language Learners, home literacy, Mexican immigrant families, Mexican immigrant parents, shared reading, parent workshops, Spanish speaking families
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# ESTABLISHING A DIALOGIC READING CURRICULUM

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Chapter One: Statement of the Problem

Eighty five percent of the foundation for a child’s personality, intellect, and skills is laid by his or her fifth birthday (Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, Inc., 2006). Children are capable of rapidly developing oral language and emergent literacy during these early years (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). By the time five year olds enter school, some of their greatest years of learning have already passed and if the years have not been taken advantage of, children may quickly find themselves behind in a fast paced educational environment.

A quick look at the Common Core Standards for kindergarteners would help to illustrate the expectations educators and policy makers have for five and six year old children. By the time students exit kindergarten they are expected to understand far beyond the basic alphabet and do such things as, “Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding,” and “confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, pp. 6, 11).

A child’s learning during early childhood positively impacts his future academic success. For example, the literacy development an older child is promoted through shared reading experiences that happen during the first five years of life (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998). Children as early as eight months old have been shown to demonstrate gains in oral language as a result of participating in shared
reading experiences (Karrass & Braungart-Rieker, 2005). Shared reading has been found to produce many benefits for young children including oral language development, understanding of concepts of print, and reading comprehension (Piasta, Justice, McGinty, & Kaderavek, 2012). Dialogic reading, a specific form of shared reading in which parents have an interactive dialogue while reading, offers even greater benefits to children’s emergent literacy skills (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

Dialogic reading practices in the home can help to develop or accelerate literacy skills in children. Most studies of shared reading experiences with young children in the home have focused on middle class, well educated, English speaking, Caucasian families (Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, & Morrison, 2008). Very little has been done to promote shared reading experiences and explore their potential to benefit the growing population of low-income families across the United States who do not have the same resources. While the young children of Mexican Immigrant families in an area such as Southern California could benefit from shared reading experiences in the home in their earliest years of development, the educational needs of this large population of Mexican immigrants in Southern California continue to be poorly met.

Educators have made great efforts to help catch many school age immigrant children up to grade level by helping with literacy. If the interventions were to start earlier, it is likely that less would need to be done to catch kids up. Unfortunately, many of the programs and curriculum that have been developed to reach young
Mexican immigrant children before they enter school, have neglected the power of shared reading experiences in the family setting. Instead, the focus has been to teach these children to learn English at preschool as many are placed in English only classrooms. Frustrations have been expressed on both sides of the coin between parents and educators. On one side, parents claim that they don’t know what teachers want from them and that teachers are unable to communicate with them in their native language (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). On the other side, educators often claim that parents don’t care and don’t try to be involved in their children’s education (Murillo, September 2012). Many of the curricula that do exist for Mexican immigrant preschool children do not validate the valuable role of families in early education.

Unfortunately, Mexican Immigrant parents are frequently not empowered to be a part of their children’s early education. These parents are not provided with accessible information to learn about the Common Core Standards for kindergarten and to be educated on the importance of interacting with children in the areas of literacy before entering school. The main problem is that little curriculum exists for workshops to support Mexican immigrant families to engage their young children in shared reading experiences.

**The purpose of the project**

The purpose of this project is to design a curriculum that will endeavor to include Mexican immigrant parents in educating their preschool children in the earliest stages of literacy development through shared book reading. The project will
consist of a curriculum that can be used both to teach and to coach parents. The first part of the curriculum will include a series of workshops to teach parents dialogic shared reading with their children, including how to use the resources available to successfully continue in this process. The second part of the curriculum will include a series of coaching tools to be used by coaches during open sessions in which parents can practice dialoguing with their children as they read or observe reading with a coach. The curriculum will address logistical needs of the families and also tap the funds of knowledge and personal resources that parents already possess, such as oral language traditions, to support their children’s development (Murillo, 2012).

**Significance of Project**

The significance of this project is the potential to extend the benefits of early childhood shared reading experiences within the context of the family to the Mexican immigrant families in the community. This project creates a bridge between them and educational practices and resources. By creating a useful curriculum tailored to Mexican immigrant families through language and literacy support, this project will empower parents to better understand the education system in which their children will enter and see themselves as an equal partner. Parents will be better equipped to partner with educators, because they will confidently enter the school arena as their children’s first teachers.

**Limitations of Project**

The term Mexican immigrant encompasses a large population of people and a project of this size could not possibly hope to address all Mexican Immigrant
children’s needs. Each family that enters the program will have a unique background, set of values, and make-up.

Another limitation of the program will have to do with participation. As with many programs, the success is limited by the amount of, and length of participation in the program. Many immigrant families are more transient and may or may not be able to remain for the length of the program (Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier 2001). Additionally, families with limited resources that are working hard to make a living, may not see the immediate benefit of a program such as this as it takes away valuable time from earning a living.

**Definitions**

*Emergent literacy.* Emergent Literacy is “a skill set and knowledge base that begins developing in infancy and that is enriched across the early childhood period by exposure to language, printed materials, and opportunities for exploratory and instructional encounters with literacy materials” (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, p. 147).

*Shared Reading.* “Shared reading broadly refers to an experience between an adult and a preschool-aged child or groups of children in which the adult primarily reads the text and may engage the child in some discussion of the story or of related ideas (van Kleeck, Gillam, Hamilton, & McGrath, 1997; What Works Clearinghouse, 2006)” (Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, & Morrison, 2008).
**Dialogic Reading.** Dialogic reading is a shared reading experience in which adults encourage children’s oral responses with “wh” and open-ended questions (Lever & Sénéchal, 2010).
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The research is clear: Literacy development begins at home well before a child reaches the age of 5. Many organizations have purposed to spread this message to parents. Most parents, when confronted with this reality, want to do what they can to prepare their children for school, but not all parents know where to begin. The problem is even more exacerbated for parents who have not been educated in the United States, don’t have readily available resources, and speak a language other than English. In the city of Escondido, CA, for example, the majority of families in this population are Mexican immigrants who are Spanish speaking. The purpose of this project is to bridge this gap for these parents by providing a curriculum that will support them in teaching emergent literacy skills to their young children.

Three key areas of research are important to review in preparation for this project. First, in order to design the most effective curriculum, it is of utmost importance to understand the population of parents for whom the curriculum will be designed. Research is available that shares Latino parents’ beliefs about their children and education. Although this project will focus primarily on Mexican immigrants, much research includes Mexican immigrants in the broader category of Latino immigrants because of commonality in language and some culture. Secondly, research needs to be reviewed regarding emergent literacy practices that have taken place in the home. This will take a look at what resources parents need, what has been done, and how practices transfer literacy skills to children. Finally, the literature
review will examine studies on the more narrowed focus of dialogic reading, the focus of the curriculum.

**Latino Immigrant’s Perspectives on Education and Literacy**

Teachers often struggle to understand Latino immigrant families. Often cultural and language barriers prevent teachers from gaining a real understanding of Latino families. This inability to connect with parents can sometimes often lead to wrong presumptions about families. Luz A. Murrillo, an educator who works among bilingual children in the Rio Grande Valley in southeast Texas, and with new educators, entitled her research, “teaching against the tides of widespread ignorance about and disrespect for bilingual parents and families” (Murrillo, 2012, p. 19). She believes that by building a bridge with Latino parents, parents and teachers can begin to work together to help kids meet their full potential. It is therefore incredibly important for the purposes of this project to shatter stereotypes of Latino families and begin to understand how many Latino families think about their children and education.

**Latino parents’ expectations for their children.**

In a longitudinal study of Latino students from kindergarten to sixth grade, researchers found that Latino parents send their children to school with high expectations of school achievement and want their children to pursue formal schooling (Goldenberg, Reese, & Garnier, 2001). Furthermore, in Suizzo and Stapelton’s 2007 study, examining home based parental involvement across European American, African American, Latino American, and Asian American ethnic groups, it
was found that Latino American parents had the highest expectations for their young children. Additionally, these expectations held true regardless of income or education level.

While educational attainment is of value to parents, many Latino parents have a specific perspective as to their role in their children’s education. Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008) state parents’ beliefs, extracted from a small qualitative study, as follows, “The parents interviewed felt that they had a major responsibility to prepare children to learn by teaching them to work hard and be respectful and that the teachers were seen as authorities of great knowledge and power and should be accorded appropriate respect” (p.11). While parents have educational aspirations for their children, the value of respect comes first (Calzada, Fernandez, & Cortez, 2010; Kummer & Lopez-Reyna, 2009).

**Latino parents’ beliefs about the preschool years.**

Cultural beliefs influence how parents interact with their children in the formative preschool years. Calzada, et al (2010) asked Mexican and Dominican mothers to compare their beliefs with their perceived beliefs of American mothers and shared:

Americans are more independent (“Americans give their children independence. They let them do what they want.”), liberal in their thinking (“they have their minds open”) and more child-centric. For example, American mothers appear to spend more time (“Kind of like they dedicate more time to children.”), communicate more frequently and openly (“The
value of giving children a say in matters is very American.”), and concentrate on teaching activities (“they make time to explain things [to their children].”)
more with their children (p. 81).

According to this account, Latino immigrant parents see American parents as maybe too involved in their young children’s lives, placing the child at the center of their world instead of only part of it. It might not make sense to spend so much effort in a preschooler’s education.

**Latino parents’ beliefs about literacy education.**

In a thorough investigation of case studies, ethnographic studies, and surveys conducted over a period of 10 years regarding immigrant Latinos’ cultural model of literacy development, Reese and Gallimore (2000) conclude, “Influenced by shared experiences in their native societies, the parents conceive of reading as something that is learned, through repeated practice, after a child begins school or formal instruction” (p. 127). Commonly accepted by many of their participants was, that children were not able to understand academic content before the age of 5, and that reading to children at the age of 2 is way too young. Studies postulate that some of this notion is connected to parents’ educational experiences growing up, being children of farmers who were lucky to have had even an elementary education. This returns to the idea from Smith, et al (2008) that parents believe their role is to prepare their children for school by teaching them to be respectful and become hard workers so that in turn, teachers can teach them. It would make sense then that many Latino immigrant parents don’t begin teaching their children how to read before they enter school.
They believe that it would be a frivolous effort for two reasons, one being that they don’t believe kids start learning until five, and secondly, at five years old is when a child can receive formal schooling. One exception to this mode of thinking was found when Reese and Gallimore (2000) observed the one time in their study that a parent read to her child before school age and engaged in literacy play was when tied to reading the Bible and connecting with moral values. So, it might be said for some that literacy is a welcome activity if it carries moral implications and promotes the value of respect.

As will be discussed in the following section, much research supports the idea that literacy develops in children at a young age. While many Latino immigrants do believe that all academic development happens at school, there are also those who endeavor to promote literacy at home.

Gillanders and Jiménez (2004) set out to study kindergarteners from low-income Mexican immigrant families with no formal schooling experience who had high levels of literacy development. Though the researchers took their sample from two bilingual kindergarten classrooms, only four students met their criteria, thus still making their findings useful but somewhat limited. Researchers gathered information from interviews, participant observations in the home, and documents of children’s work. Data was analyzed creating codes in the major themes of parents’ beliefs about literacy learning and bilingualism, and literacy practices. Researchers showed that parents were purposeful in planning literacy activities.
Literacy practices that are often valued by Latino immigrant parents are drilled exercises focusing on phonics and decoding. In Gillanders and Jiménez’s study, they found that most parents focused on phonological processes such as decoding, thought by parents to be the most important type of literacy learning. Though families were observed to participate in informal literacy activities, parents often let opportunities for informal literacy events pass, not recognizing them as such. Reese and Gallimore (2000) claim, “as beneficial as early literacy experiences with texts may be for subsequent school performance, many of the Latino parents in our sample do not include these experiences as part of a view of what literacy is and how and when learning takes place” (p. 117).

In conclusion, though it is impossible to claim that all studies represent the entire population of Mexican immigrants, some themes emerge that aid educators to better begin to understand parents’ perspectives. Mexican immigrant parents see their primary role in preparing their children for school as instilling the value of respect and hard work, and in many homes, moral values. Often parents do not participate with their children in literacy activities before their children enter school because they consider that they will learn it all from the teachers. Plus, many don’t believe that their children are ready to learn before entering school. When parents do engage in literacy activities with their children, they often focus on phonics instruction and not necessarily shared reading or informal activities.

Some of Latino parents’ beliefs about children’s early learning ability contradict early childhood research. However, parents are not entirely resistant to
change if it means improving their children’s opportunities. Reese and Gallimore studied Latino’s cultural models of literacy development. They found that parents did not reject American models of Early Literacy Development. “If reading early to children meant a better chance of academic success, no matter the novelty of such action, most parents comfortably complied with teachers’ suggestions or assignments (2000, p. 128).”

Emergent Literacy in the Home

Emergent literacy defined.

The idea of emergent literacy is not new in the field of literacy education. In 1998, Grover J. Whitehurst and Christopher J. Lonigan published a paper entitled, “Child Development and Emergent Literacy” that defined emergent literacy as, “skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are presumed to be developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing” (p.849). Children acquire literacy knowledge in a range of different areas as they develop into readers. Whitehurst and Lonigan claim that these skills develop along a continuum and not all at once. They also found that there exists a relationship between the level of literacy children possess when they enter school and their later performance in literacy. They state, “early delays are magnified at each additional step as the gap increases between what children bring to the curriculum and what the curriculum demands” (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, p. 865). Therefore, it is important to note that emergent literacy must be practiced before children receive formal reading instruction.

Different aspects of emergent literacy.
Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) divided emergent literacy into two different categories. Philips and Lonigan (2009) define these terms as outside-in and inside-out saying:

The outside-in domain includes the language, vocabulary, content, and narrative understanding skills that allow for listening, and ultimately reading comprehension abilities for individual words and connected texts. In contrast, the inside-out domain focuses on word-specific decoding and foundational skills such as alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and phonemic decoding capacities that allow the individual words to be correctly decoded and mapped to the outside-in vocabulary and concept knowledge. (p. 147, 148)

Inside-out practices of knowing letter names, sounds, and phonological practices have been found to be connected to reading comprehension in grades 1 and 2 (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000). These practices involve understanding the rules that translate writing into sounds. Outside-in practices focus more on understanding the context of trying to read (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Inside-out practices are effective in preparing children with the early skills of knowing how to read. In an early intervention for vulnerable preschoolers, it was found that explicit literacy intervention is the most effective way to teach emergent literacy skills. This study involved a small cohort of eighteen four year old children experiencing multiple risk factors. After taking a pretest, they were randomly assigned to two different intervention groups. Both intervention groups focused on mostly inside-out practices
of alphabet knowledge, print awareness, name writing, phonological awareness, segmentation, and rhyme production. At the end of only twelve weeks of intervention, children’s scores in both groups showed significant improvement in all emergent literacy measures (Justice, Chow, Capellini, Flanigan, & Colton, 2003). Evans et al. (2000) did not find students’ knowledge of letter names, sounds, phonological sensitivity and receptive vocab to be enhanced with shared book reading, emphasizing the importance of explicit instruction for inside-out practices.

**Home literacy activities and emergent literacy.**

In their study of over 1,044 families, Phillips and Lonigan (2009) found that there was a large emphasis in homes on inside-out literacy events. Furthermore, there were considerably less parents from low-SES that participated in outside-in practices, postulating that this was due to lack of resources such as reading books. It appears however, that many families feel comfortable participating in inside-out literacy practices as this is how many parents identify with learning how to read. There is still research to be done on how home literacy environments affect future literacy achievement both in monolingual and bilingual families (Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Reyes & Azuara, 2008).

**Dialogic Reading**

Shared reading is defined as, a reading experience between an adult and a preschool aged child where the adult reads text and may engage children in some discussion (Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, & Morrison, 2008). Dialogic reading is a form of shared reading that extends further by having parents question and give
feedback (Lever & Sénéchal, 2010). The information that follows highlights research on both shared reading and dialogic reading. Shared reading would be categorized as an outside-in emergent literacy activity and as seen above, is not as commonly found in home literacy environments. Shared reading and dialogic reading have not been found to be effective at teaching decoding skills but, are effective at promoting skills in many other areas of literacy.

**Effects of shared/dialogic reading.**

Studies of shared reading and dialogic reading commonly agree that such reading has an effect on increased language ability (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Lever & Sénéchal, 2010; Karras & Braungart-Rieker, 2005, Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, & Morrison, 2008; Justice et al, 2003). Furthermore, Whitehurst and Lonigan discovered that dialogic reading produces even larger effects on language than shared reading (1998). Researchers Karras and Braungart-Rieker followed babies ages four months and eight months whose caregivers participated in shared reading with them. They then measured the children’s expressive language at twelve and sixteen months and found that being read to at eight months had a positive association with later expressive language abilities. (2005) Hindman et. al. confirmed once again in their study of the various factors in shared book reading that shared reading does not usually increase code related talk but more descriptive language and higher order thinking skills (2008). Lever and Sénéchal also hypothesized that dialogic reading should enhance four aspects of narrative ability, “story structure, language complexity, cohesion, and decontextualized language” (2010, p.5).
Dialogic reading is also thought to enhance affective components that are not as easily measured. For example, though Karras and Braungart-Rieker did not find a correlation between being read to at four months and later growth in expressive language, they argued that the shared reading experience could have had a positive effect on attention span.

**Shared reading interventions.**

In an early literacy intervention for Spanish-speaking English language learners, researchers Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) involved preschool children from low-income backgrounds in a study examining the effects of shared reading activities. They found that between preschool and home reading, parents were more influential in increasing their child’s preschool literacy. Hindman et. al. also found when examining the multiple factors of shared book reading that children spoke more with their parents than their teachers (2008). These interventions help to show the importance of training parents and involving them in shared reading experiences with their children.

Sanders, Gerson, Huffman, and Mendoza (2000) sought to learn about factors associated with home-book sharing routines of first-generation Hispanic immigrant families through participating in a prescribed book sharing intervention. They found that Mexican families were more at risk of fewer frequent book sharing at home. They found that when pediatricians prescribed book sharing at home, and provided books for parents to use, family book sharing increased. This is only the beginning in
understanding the most effective methods for leading parents to participate in emergent literacy activities at home.

**Conclusion**

The research comes together to show a need to create a construct such as parent workshops in order to educate Mexican immigrant parents in the process of dialogic reading. First of all, research points to the commonly held view by Mexican immigrant parents that children do not learn how to read until they enter school. It also shows that these parents often lack the necessary resources be it education, books, or language to begin reading with their children. Secondly, the research is clear that emergent literacy skills are important to foster in children before they enter the doors of kindergarten. The later children receive these skills, the further behind their peers they find themselves. While inside-out practices of decoding and phonological awareness are crucial ingredients in learning how to read, much is already being done to promote this in homes and at preschool. Dialogic reading has been shown to benefit children’s literacy skills in many ways. This practice however is not as widely known. Mexican immigrant families are less likely to engage in this practice on their own highlighting this as a focus for training.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This project was designed based on the principal that it is essential for children to participate in literacy activities before entering their elementary classrooms. These practices could and should have begun at infancy, not when children entered preschool. Therefore, parents needed to be the first educators for their children by engaging in quality early literacy practices such as shared reading experiences. Many immigrant parents in the area where this project was developed were learning English and new to the United States. They were uncertain of how to begin practicing literacy at home with their young children. The main problem was that virtually no accessible curriculum existed for workshops to support Mexican immigrant families to engage their young children in shared reading experiences. This project was focused on creating workshops to help educate parents in this area.

Design

This project created a curriculum. A curriculum is a well-accepted design within the field of education. A curriculum establishes learning objectives, sequences these into learning experiences, plans the content, instructional strategies and material resources to be used during the teaching and learning experiences and teach to the learning objectives. This curriculum was organized into two main sections. The first section consisted of workshops for parents to attend. The second section consisted of coaching sessions that provided opportunities for parents to practice skills they were taught. The curriculum provided teachers bilingual materials to support teaching them in both English and Spanish.
Setting

The community that benefited from this curriculum was located in the center of a Southern California borderland city. Community members lived in low income households, were from a lower working class, and many did not have easy access to transportation. The families who participated were primarily first or second generation Mexican immigrants. They were predominantly Spanish speaking with varying degrees of English speaking abilities. In this community, there was a large percentage of young preschool aged children. Parents came also with varying levels of education from having no formal schooling to being a high school graduate.

Procedures

The curriculum was designed to contain the following sections: Introduction, Section 1: Workshops, Section 2: Coaching Sessions. The following is a descriptive outline and plan of the curriculum.

Introduction.

In the introduction to the curriculum, I explained the underlying assumptions, rationale and purpose of the curriculum. I provided a brief orientation on how to read and use the curriculum.

- The curriculum was designed with an important belief in mind, that Mexican immigrant parents have accessible funds of knowledge that when shared, greatly benefit their children (Murillo, September 2012).
• There was a need for the curriculum as little training existed in the community that recognized parents as teachers and gave them resources to read effectively with their children.

• The purpose of the curriculum was to empower Mexican immigrant parents as their children’s first educators and to aid young children in acquiring important emergent literacy skills at home before entering kindergarten.

• There was a brief orientation to how to read and use the curriculum. The reason I included the introduction in my curriculum was so that the curriculum could stand alone as a valuable resource for the targeted community and other similar communities. By having the introduction, many more people could be included in implementing the curriculum, with the potential of impacting more families with young children. The introduction was intended to serve as a guide to the heart of the workshops so that the educator would be equipped not just with the right curriculum but also the right perspective.

Section 1 of the Curriculum: Workshops for Parents

Workshop #1: Parent introduction to emergent literacy and Common Core.

In this workshop, I focused on the following information and processes:

• Get to know parents and backgrounds. Informally assess parents’ comfort levels with reading to their children, their beliefs about teaching literacy to their children, and their abilities to access reading materials.
• Introduce the Common Core Standards for kindergarten (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

• Share with parents about formal research regarding emergent literacy skill development in children.

• Encourage parents to go home and assess their current level of involvement in their child’s literacy development.

The reason I included workshop 1 in my curriculum was twofold. One, I wanted to begin to build relationships with the parents, providing an environment where parents felt genuinely regarded as equals in the process of educating their children. Secondly, it was my desire that parents began to understand the importance of dialogic reading in light of kindergarten standards and current research. Both of these goals worked together to create a purpose for parents to continue to participate in the follow up workshops and coaching sessions.

**Workshop #2: Parent introduction to dialogic reading.**

In this workshop I focused on the following information and processes:

• Highlight parents’ funds of knowledge accessible for reading with their children. Provide answers to perceived shortcomings.

• Model how to select a book to read with children, focusing on their child’s interests.

• Establish definitions for shared reading and dialogic reading.
• Share local resources for children’s literature.
• Teach how to ask “wh” questions when reading with children and how to interact with their answers (Whitehurst, Arnold, et al. 1994).
• Encourage parents to practice reading and employing “wh” questions at home with children.

The reason I included workshop 2 in my curriculum was to form a foundation for dialogic reading. Parents are encouraged to work their new learning into their already existing schema of knowledge about reading with their children. This workshop not only works to provide information but resources and tangible instructions on how to replicate the practice of dialogic reading with their children.

Workshop #3: Dialogic Reading in depth.

In this workshop I focused on the following information and processes:

• Reflect on parent’ shared reading experiences with their children.
• Expand upon dialogic reading components beyond asking “wh” questions using Read Together, Talk Together as a guide (Whitehurst, 1994).

I included workshop 3 in my curriculum to help parents extend their practice of dialogic reading. It was intended to celebrate success and add more opportunity for growth in the practice.

Section 2 of the Curriculum: Coaching Sessions

Coaching #1.
In coaching session 1, I focused on supporting coaches conducting the following activities:

- Establish a schedule for regular reading time at home with children.
- Parents initially help child select a book from supplied library.
- Parents reread the book to their child and ask “wh” questions.
- Coaches observe and are available for support.

The reason I included this coaching session in my curriculum was to support coaches as they gave parents immediate practice and feedback for their new learning. It was important that parents who attended the workshops receive immediate follow up so that they would be able to practice their new skills with confidence.

**Coaching #2.**

In coaching session 2, I focused on supporting coaches conducting the following activities:

- Parents aid child in selecting a new book and read it to their child.
- Parents reread the book to their child, using another “C” technique (Whitehurst, 1994).

I included this coaching session in the curriculum to aid coaches as they provided practice to parents of the new skills taught.

**Workshop and Coaching Structure**

Every workshop will have the same structure setting a pattern for meeting times.
**Introduction.** Begin each workshop with a poem related to being a parent. Elicit parent responses written and orally. This is designed to activate parents’ prior thinking and as a warm up for the group. This time is only designed to last about fifteen minutes.

**Training.** This time will make up the majority of the session. It is designed to last approximately 45 minutes. It will mostly be taught by the instructor with opportunities to interact throughout.

**Practice and challenge.** During this time, skills will be modeled and shared either in person or on video. Parents will be allowed to practice the skill with a partner and will then be given their challenge for the week to take home. This too should last approximately 15 minutes.

Coaching workshops will follow a similar format to the workshops.

**Introduction.** This will be an emergent literacy game for parent and child to interact with. This is intended to last about ten minutes. As parents arrive, they will also be given the opportunity to write down questions about their reading process with their children from earlier in the week.

**Book selection.** Parent and child will select their reading book for the day, about five minutes.

**Initial book reading.** Parent will read the selected book to the child, about five to ten minutes.

**Dialogic reading.** Parent will practice the dialogic reading technique of the session. This should take about fifteen minutes.
Questions. This will be a time for parent and coach to interact about the process, asking questions.
Chapter Four: Project

See attached workshop curriculum entitled, *Learning at Home/ Aprendiendo en La Casa.*
Chapter Five: Reflection

Introduction

There exists a need for parent workshops that teach home literacy practices for Mexican immigrant families. Countless programs already exist in preschools that develop early literacy skills outside the home. There are also programs that provide resources on how to approach literacy in the home but few programs exist that do not target the dominant, middle class, American born, English speaking families. This project is designed to meet the need of workshops for families who have not been educated in the United States, who may lack material resources and/or the ability to speak English.

Summary

The curriculum that is created for this project consists of three workshops and two coaching sessions. The workshops are written for bilingual presenters who will teach parents of preschool age children. Each workshop has a specific goal in mind beginning with educating parents about the need for emergent literacy in the home. The first workshop is designed to marry parents’ ideas about early literacy education with current research on early literacy education. It challenges parents with the need by looking at the Common Core Standards for kindergarten. It then takes a look at misconceived ideas about literacy education found to be held by some Latino immigrants and reteaches parents based on current research. The following two workshops teach parents to hone the practice of dialogic reading borrowing upon the work of Grover Whitehurst but adapting it to fit the population for whom the
workshops are intended. By the end of the three workshops, parents receive all the training necessary to successfully practice dialogic reading in the home. The two coaching sessions are set in line right after each of the final two workshops. These coaching sessions are structured for parents to have real practice with their children in dialogic reading with the availability of a coach to observe and ask questions.

Implications

The curriculum created in this project addresses the specific need for emergent literacy curriculum instruction for parents who are Mexican immigrants. This curriculum serves as a beginning resource in supporting parent involvement in early literacy education. The workshops integrate the new Common Core Standards, making them accessible to parents and further showing the need for these workshops. In these, it is recognized that children who enter kindergarten without any emergent literacy skills are already behind. In Whitehurst and Lonigan’s study (1998), they showed that the early delays children enter with in school are only magnified as their education years go on. This curriculum focuses on one emergent literacy activity that has been shown to be a benefit to develop specific emergent literacy skills.

The practice of dialogic reading that is taught in these workshops has been shown to increase students’ expressive language, knowledge about concepts of print and knowledge of story structure among other things (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Lever & Sénéchal, 2010; Karras & Braungart-Rieker, 2005, Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, & Morrison, 2008; Justice et al, 2003). Dialogic reading was chosen as the focus because it is an activity that requires no other materials than a book and does
not require high levels of literacy education to execute. Additionally, it is an outside-in practice that is often neglected in emergent literacy training in favor of inside-out practices.

This curriculum uses current research to teach parents how to employ the process of dialogic reading with their preschool age children. Many resources exist to help middle class English speaking families who have been educated in the United States. However, most Southern Californian schools do not serve only these populations. There is a growing number of families who have emigrated from Mexico, are living in low socioeconomic conditions, and/or do not speak English. Educators and researchers have endeavored to serve the needs of their children through various intervention programs both before entering school and in the classroom. For various reasons though, the parents of these children are often overlooked. Little curriculum has been created that treats Mexican immigrant parents as partners in education. This curriculum does.

**Recommendations**

This curriculum is useful and necessary right now in North County San Diego. There are communities in every school district in the county with Mexican immigrant families who would benefit from the resources and who would become empowered in a way they haven’t before. Schools in these communities continue to endeavor to meet the needs of students from these families and to try to connect with parents. This curriculum serves as another powerful resource to bridge relationships between schools and families. It may even be one of the few resources that exist that calls
upon parents to be their children’s educators before ever entering school. It empowers parents to take charge of their children’s education and to approach the years of school with confidence.

In order to effectively communicate to parents that they truly are valued as their children’s first educators and they have much to offer, the workshops need to be held in a place where parents feel comfortable and appreciated. Public schools tend to be places that intimidate immigrant parents and so would not be the first choice unless the schools already have well established parent programs. Ideally, this curriculum will be presented in a community center that has already been established in the community. A few nonprofit groups have set up community centers in neighborhoods of Escondido that support families and children with tutoring services, English classes, and material resources. These places have worked hard to establish trusting relationships in the community and would be invaluable partners in implementing this curriculum. Once the curriculum has been taught a few times, it can become entirely native involving attendees as teachers, further empowering communities of parents in the education of their children. The only modification would be that the lesson plans would need to be translated if non-bilingual parents taught the curriculum.

This curriculum provides a small resource for reaching immigrant parents and empowering them as their children’s educators. It could be easily adapted to reach other communities outside of North County San Diego, California, especially those that reach Spanish speaking immigrant parents. Many child development centers and
preschools that reach the same population are current in best education practices for young children. These programs could integrate this curriculum into their current education programs by involving parents at a deeper level. Preschool programs merged with parent support at home would prove to be instrumental in teaching preschoolers. These programs have the potential to grow together.

**Limitations**

This curriculum seeks to address a need for workshops designed for Mexican immigrant families. Due to the use of the all-encompassing term of Mexican immigrants, the curriculum is fairly broad in what it addresses. Within a community of Mexican immigrant families, one encounters families who are first generation immigrants, second generation immigrants, etc… Within each generation of immigrants, individuals come with unique educational experiences and backgrounds. The resources that families possess are also hugely varied. Since early literacy resources already exist for American educated families that speak English, the design of this curriculum was to draw upon the strengths of families that were unable to access the already existent resources. Therefore, the curriculum has Spanish components for non-English speakers, is highly verbal for parents who have weaker literacy skills, and draws upon the many available free resources for parents who lack material resources. It in no way intends to create stereotypes but to provide more accessible resources that did not already exist.

To better face the needs of all immigrant parents, the curriculum needs a further optional literacy component for parents who are unable to read in their child’s
native language. Some parents in the North County San Diego communities do not have the benefit of any formal schooling and even consider children’s books a daunting reading task. This would need to be an additional collection of workshops added before the other workshops.

It is also important for parents to understand that these workshops only address part of early literacy needs. Dialogic reading, when used correctly, truly promotes many early literacy skills. However, research shows that dialogic reading does not promote phonological processes essential for early literacy (Hindeman et al., 2008). This is where a preschool partnership would benefit children’s emergent literacy. Perhaps, though, after learning the practice of dialogic reading, parents might be inspired to continue growing as educators and further develop their knowledge of phonological processes through more workshops.

**Further Research**

This project was envisioned after working with at-risk upper elementary students who had grown up in the United States and yet still possessed low CELDT levels and reading scores. Research would suggest that a possibility for these low levels of achievement is because of a delay early on in a child’s literacy process. To quote Whitehurst and Lonigan again, they say, “early delays are magnified at each additional step as the gap increases between what children bring to the curriculum and what the curriculum demands” (1998, p. 865). Furthermore, these children’s parents did not participate readily in their children’s schooling because they lacked the language and the knowledge of what their children needed to learn. It was then
hypothesized that if interventions were provided for parents early on that supported them in educating their children, perhaps such gaps would be lessened. Research is clear: dialogic reading interventions do benefit children’s early literacy skills. Parents reading with their children benefit children’s early literacy skills. The question remains, what are the long term effects? What early parent-child literacy practices have lasting effects on their children’s further literacy development?

Finally, as parents start to feel empowered as their children’s educators, what more will they need as their children enter school? Parents may begin reading with their children in Spanish but as children are placed in English speaking classrooms, parents can quickly be placed by the wayside. English classes with school specific language may need to be developed to support parents as they support their children. Programs need to be developed or adapted that transition parents from preschool age to kindergarten and elementary school at large.

Conclusion

The attached curriculum is a small part of a grand desire to help improve Mexican immigrant children’s chances at success in school. The curriculum provides workshops for Mexican immigrant parents of preschoolers, a need that was not being readily met. It also teaches parents and provides ample opportunity for practice of dialogic reading, which will build important emergent literacy skills in their children. Perhaps however, the passion and heart behind the curriculum is larger than what the curriculum will feasibly accomplish. This is why this curriculum should be considered a small part of a larger vision. The vision includes the importance of
being bilingual. It includes valuing everything that parents bring from their life experiences. It includes the importance of early literacy interactions in the preschool years. Finally, it includes the need to embrace families as an important part of child development and learning.
References


*Child Development*, 69(3), 848-872.
Learning at Home
Aprendiendo en la Casa

A curriculum for teaching dialogic reading to Mexican immigrant parents of preschoolers.

By Sheri Bielma
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Introduction

Understanding the heart and perspective

The curriculum that follows is a guide to empower parents as their children’s first educators. At the heart of the curriculum is that parents come with already existing funds of knowledge to share with their children (Murillo, September 2012). While it will be expected that parents come without some material and educational assets, the focus will be on what they do have to offer. The curriculum was designed purposefully with this underlying assumption and makes it a point not to call to attention any deficits, perceived or real. For example, in order to not focus on parents’ academic abilities, presentations will be conducted using multiple modalities. Parents will never be expected to just read or write but will also be given the options of listening and speaking; sometimes even drawing. Any resources that will be necessary for the workshop time will be provided and/or made accessible so that finances do not hinder attendance.

Relationships are key. An important reminder while conducting the curriculum is, “People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” This must be at the heart of the presentations. Parents come voluntarily and must feel that they are in a welcoming environment where people genuinely want to know them and help them and their children.

There is a need for the curriculum as little training exists in the community that recognizes parents as teachers and gives them resources to read effectively with their children. The community abounds with preschool programs that offer literacy support to non-English speaking children. Yet, the problem still remains that these programs are not utilizing the valuable assets parents have to offer nor providing them with the resources they need to teach their children. Workshops and follow-up coaching sessions therefore need to be put into place to support these parents.
Understanding the purpose

The purpose of the curriculum is to empower Mexican immigrant parents as their children’s first educators and to aid young children in acquiring important emergent literacy skills at home before entering kindergarten. The workshops and curriculum are designed to support Mexican immigrant parents with preschool aged children. The workshops are designed to challenge parents with information about their child’s learning in school and learning capabilities at home. Beyond that, the workshops will give parents tools for promoting literacy in their homes through the process of dialogic reading. Finally, once given the tools, the coaching sessions will provide parents with guided practice in order for them to feel successful and able to carry out the practices in their homes. Children who have spent time in shared reading activities have been found to have greater expressive language, an understanding of concepts about print, and a greater understanding of narrative elements of a story, among other affective components that aren’t as easily measured (Lever & Senechal, 2010; Karrass & Braungart-Rieker, 2005).

Understanding how to read and use the curriculum

Setting up the environment

Most workshops will take place in a classroom environment. Place desks into groups of four to allow for group interactions. Each table will need a supply of pencils, pens, markers, and post it notes. Make sure all desk groups are able to see the front board. Ideally, it would be helpful to work in a room with a document camera and projector in order to easily display papers. In a corner of the room, set up a small children’s library where parents will be encouraged to explore books in English and Spanish. On a table in the back of the room, keep papers from previous workshops and other resources that would be helpful to parents. On one last table, set out simple refreshments such as water bottles and a snack mix.
Coaching sessions need to have a more flexible arrangement. Set chairs (detached from desks) around the room. Lay out blankets and pillows on the floor. Attempt to make the room reflect a more relaxed environment, more likened to what families might experience at home. As with the workshops, set up the refreshment table, resource table, and classroom library. Keep a few desk areas set up around the room to allow for conference times with the presenter.

Presenting the curriculum

It is an expectation that workshop presenters are bilingual educators capable of differentiating the curriculum to fit the specific needs of attendees be it language or task difficulties.

The workshops are divided into 3 distinct sections: Introduction, Training, and Practice and Challenge. The introduction time is intended to serve as a relational time where parents can connect and reconnect with the presenter(s) and their classmates. This time is also a time to connect already existing background knowledge to the topic of the day and will be done through a poem, song, or story.

The training time is the bulk of the workshop and is when the presenter will do most of the teaching. The presenter is given the freedom to teach with his/her own style but scripted parts are intended as important transitions and need to be read as is.

During the practice and challenge, parents will often be given an exercise to complete at the training as well as at home, with the presenter providing feedback. This is also an appropriate time to answer any outstanding questions parents might have.

The coaching sessions will also have a large group introduction but will then have a more flexible setting for parents to select books and read with their children with coaches available. The workshop presenter will serve as a coach and more coaches familiar with the process will also be required as directed.
Workshop #1

Materials

- Copies of Resource pages
- Cardstock for name tags and markers
- Copies of the Common Core Standards in English and Spanish

Introduction

(approximately 15 minutes)

- Invite parents to create a name tag as they enter. This name tag will sit at their desk and serve also as an icebreaker to get to know each other. In each corner of the name tag, encourage parents to place one of each of the following in words or pictures: how many children they have, where they were born, a hobby they enjoy doing, and a favorite book if they have one. Encourage parents to introduce themselves in small groups of 3 or 4 if the setting is larger than 20 people, or to the whole group.
- Distribute copies of the poem, “Growing Up” by Liz Ann Báez Aguilar, and read aloud to the group, in English and in the Spanish translation (Báez Aguilar, 2001)
- Ask parents to share their initial responses to the poem with a partner nearby, and then call upon volunteers to share with the group as a whole.
- Share, “You have all been invited to these workshops, because we believe that you, the parents, are your children’s first educators. How you invest in your young children’s lives will have some of the greatest impact on their future.”

Training

(approximately 60 minutes)

- Say and write/display, “We have two main goals today. Our first goal is to learn about the Common Core Standards and what learning is expected of kindergarten students in
regards to reading. Our second goal is to understand the early reading processes that can be implemented before a child enters school and the benefits of participating in them at home.”

• Ask parents to break into teams of four, making sure to have someone who is a confident reader. Explain that each state has education standards at each grade that serve as a guide for teaching and a measure of students’ learning. Provide strips of paper that have both individual Kindergarten Common Core Standards and fictitious standards. Give parents time to read through the strips of paper and sort them into categories of true standards and false standards. Go over the answers as a class.

• Provide copies of the Kindergarten Common Core Standards to parents (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Ask parents to share out any reactions to the new Common Core Standards and questions. Limit this time to no more than 10 minutes, and provide fact sheets for further exploration by parents (Ford, 2012). This article can be retrieved at http://www.colorincolorado.org/articulo/53566/?theme=print. The goal is that parents recognize the depth of learning that takes place in kindergarten and what will be expected of their children.

• Explain, “Children entering kindergarten who have no preparation for reading will make some growth but most likely will struggle to accomplish all of the standards and will continue to get further behind. It is essential that parents take steps early on in a child’s development to prepare him/her for reading. We are going to take a look at some myths that exist concerning parents’ role in teaching their children how to read.”

• Use the “Mythbusters” fact sheet as a guide to share with parents the importance of early literacy involvement with their child. Be prepared to answer questions along the way.
Practice and challenge

Encourage parents to go home and assess their current level of involvement in their child’s literacy development using the survey provided. Make sure they understand that it is not a grade but merely a tool for them to bring back and discuss.
Resource 1-1: “Growing Up”

When I grow up,  
I want to be a doctor.  

M’ija, you will patch scraped  
knees  
and wipe away children’s tears.  

But what if I become an  
architect?  

M’ija, you will build beautiful  
houses  
where children will sing and play.  

And what if I become a teacher?  

M’ija, you will teach  
your students to read every day.  

But what if I become a famous  
chef?  

M’ija, your arroz con pollo  
will be eaten with gozo.  

And Mami, what if I want to be  
like you someday?  

M’ija, why do you want to be like  
me?  

Oh Mami, because you care for  
people, our house is built on  
love,  
you are wise, and your spicy  
stew tastes delicious.  

Liz Ann Báez Aguilar

Cuando crezca,  
Quiero ser una doctora.  

M’ija, curará rodillas heridas  
y limpiará las lágrimas de los niños.  

¿Pero que pasaría si me convirtiera en  
arquitecta?  

M’ija construirá lindas casas  
donde niños cantarán y jugarán.  

¿y si me convirtiera en maestra?  

M’ija, enseñará  
a tus estudiantes a leer cada día.  

¿Pero que pasaría si me convirtiera en una  
cocinera famosa?  

M’ija tu arroz con pollo  
habrá comido con gozo.  

y Mami, que pasaría si quiero ser como ud.  
algún día?  

M’ija, porque quieres ser como yo?  

O Mami, porque ud. cuida a la gente, la  
casa está construida con amor, tiene  
sabiduría, y la sopa picante de ud. es  
deliciosa.  

Liz Ann Báez Aguilar
**Resource 1-2**

**Common Core Standards Sorting Activity**

Prior to workshop #1, make copies and cut out strips, allowing one group of strips for every four people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.</th>
<th>Siguen las palabras de izquierda a derecha, de arriba hacia abajo y página por página.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.</td>
<td>Reconocen que el lenguaje oral (palabras habladas) se representa en el lenguaje escrito por secuencias específicas de letras.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand that words are separated by spaces in print.</td>
<td>Entienden que las palabras están separadas por espacios en los materiales impresos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize and name all upper-and lowercase letters of the alphabet.</td>
<td>Reconocen y nombran todas las letras mayúsculas y minúsculas del alfabeto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.</td>
<td>Leen textos para lectores principiantes, con propósito y comprensión.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize and produce rhyming words.</td>
<td>Reconocen y producen palabras que rimen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words.</td>
<td>Cuentan, pronuncian, combinan y segmentan las sílabas en palabras habladas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does).</td>
<td>Leen a simple vista palabras comunes de uso frecuente (ejemplo: el, la, veo, gusta, un, una, mi, es).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sing the alphabet.</td>
<td>Cantan el abecedario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to a story.</td>
<td>Escuchan a un cuento.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat words in a book when read to.</td>
<td>Repiten palabras en un libro que han escuchado.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express a like or dislike of a story.</td>
<td>Expresan si les gusta o no les gusta un cuento.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>Mito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only real learning happens in the classroom.</td>
<td>El aprendizaje verdadero solo pasa en el aula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There isn’t anything a parent who didn’t graduate high school can teach his/her child.</td>
<td>No hay nada que un padre que no graduó de la preparatoria puede enseñar a su hijo/a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are not ready to learn until they are 5 years old.</td>
<td>Niños no están listos para aprender hasta la edad de 5 años.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s no point reading with my child in Spanish if he/she is going to learn English at school.</td>
<td>No tiene sentido leer con mi hijo/a en español si él/ella va a aprender el inglés en la escuela.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children will learn all they need to know at school.</td>
<td>Niños aprenderán todo lo que es necesario saber en la escuela.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| English. Children enter school with an advantage if they are proficient in their native language. | transfierten fácilmente del español al inglés. Niños que están proficientes en su lenguaje nativo al entrar en la escuela entran con una ventaja. |
### Resource 1-4: Parent Home Literacy Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Spanish Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How many children’s books do you have in your home?</td>
<td>¿Cuántos libros para niños tienen Uds. en la casa?</td>
<td>0 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How many times in a month do you go to the public library?</td>
<td>¿Cuántas veces en un mes van a la biblioteca pública?</td>
<td>0 1-2 3-4 5+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How many times a week do you read to your child?</td>
<td>¿Cuántos días a la semana lee Ud. a su hijo/a?</td>
<td>0 1-2 3-4 5-6 7+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does your child read to him/herself?</td>
<td>¿Lee su hijo/a a sí mismo/a?</td>
<td>Yes/Sí No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. On a scale from 1-10, 1 being the least, how comfortable do you feel reading to your child in Spanish?</td>
<td>¿En una escala de 1 a 10, siendo 10 lo menos, cómo se siente Ud. leer a su hijo/a en español?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In English?</td>
<td>¿En inglés?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What would you say is the biggest obstacle you have in reading with your child?</td>
<td>¿Qué diría que es su obstáculo más grande en leer con su hijo/a?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workshop #2

Materials

- Copies of Resource pages
- 20 assorted children’s books
- Large presentation paper (one page per group) and markers
- Choose a book before class and prepare “wh” questions. Give these to a class member who will be willing to help model dialogic reading.

Introduction

(15 minutes)

  
  Provide copies for the parents in English and Spanish. Read the poem aloud and give the parents five minutes to respond in writing or pictures. Give the parents five additional minutes to discuss the poem in their group. Ask for any comments parents might have regarding the poem. The emphasis on this poem is the idea of going beyond what we know and are comfortable doing. By parents entering into this realm of educating their children, they are “crossing the door” with their children.

Training

(60 minutes)

- Pass out to each table of parents a large sheet of paper split into two columns: areas of success (áreas de éxito) and areas for improvement (áreas para mejorar). Encourage parents to share aloud at their tables one area from their survey where they feel they are doing well in helping their child to read and one area in which they struggle. Once every one has shared, have parents work together to visually represent commonalities among them in the two categories. One person will then share out from each table as the
presenter makes a class poster to represent the shared ideas. Take some time to acknowledge strengths. If areas of difficulty are listed that are not covered in the training, save time to address them at the end of the workshop or prepare to address them at the next workshop.

- “There are many areas of emergent literacy and many ways to help kids learn how to read. Working on sounds and letter names are important as well as writing. However, these will not be the focus of these workshops. For one, they most likely will learn these in preschool, and two, these will depend upon what language you decide to have your child learn to read first. The skill we will be learning and practicing in these workshops is called dialogic reading. It involves reading with your child in any language and dialoguing with them as you read. This teaches children the concepts about print: how to hold a book, the direction that print travels, the concept that words carry meaning, and various other concepts. Dialogic reading increases children's language as they hear new words from books and interact with you as an adult. Additionally, as you read different types of stories with your child, they begin to understand different literary structures and develop higher order thinking skills.”

- Do the activity, “Where do books come from?” Set out 20 different books, making sure to include a mix of alphabet/number books, rhyming books, and narratives. Vary the types of artwork and number of words on each page. Include wordless books to show parents with low level literacies that such resources exist. Have parents explore the books and fill in the chart, if they feel comfortable. Once finished looking through the books, have them find two other people to share their findings with. Lead the discussion into a whole group discussion and make it a point to distinguish between the different types of books, emphasizing the need for variety in children’s choices. Take a vote to find which book the parents liked best. There should be a variety of responses. Use this to emphasize the need for parents to let their kids choose books that interest them as we all have
different unique interests. The more interested a child is in their own literacy, the more success you can expect as you read with your child.

• “This may lead you to ask the question, where do we find all of these books? The first place to go is the public library. The public library offers free library cards and only needs proof of residence. Books are free to check out as long as they are returned on time. This may be difficult to keep track of if you have more than one child or your children are young. Here are some recommendations:
  o Each child may check out the number of books equivalent to his/her age. For example, a 6 year old may check out 6 books. If you are checking books out yourself, set an even number that you always check out such as 8 or 10.
  o Keep the return slip with the books and keep the books in the same place at home: a bookshelf, box, bag, etc...After reading books, always return them to that place.
  o Go to the library on the same day of the week. For example, always go Saturday mornings.

If you are interested in owning books, there are also many ways to get them. There are of course bookstores but they are often the most expensive. Large stores such as Walmart and Costco often carry children’s books at discounted prices. There are many publishers also online such as Scholastic that sell children’s books at discounted prices. If you don’t mind owning used books, try shopping at garage sales, thrift stores, and even the library store which sells children’s books often for less than $1 apiece. If you have older children in school, you can often participate in Scholastic catalog orders with them as well.”

• “Once you have picked your books, it is time to read.” You will have a book that you chose ahead of time to read to the group and read it to everyone, making sure to show the pictures.
• Explain that you will be reading the book through a second time but this time, you will be asking one person questions as you read. Prepare this person before class with your questions, and the few questions that you do not want them to answer. Read through the book but ask “wh” questions of your listener. For those previously selected questions where your listener doesn’t respond, provide the answer and a follow up question. Give lots of praise. When finished, use the following questions to guide a group discussion:
  o What was different the second time that I read?
  o What did you notice about the questions that I asked?
  o How did I keep the reading going if the listener did not know the answer?
  o Any other observations?
• Explicitly share the process of READ or LEER that you used as you read the text.
  o R-Read the story, stopping to ask questions.
  E-Evaluate your child’s answers
  A-Add to or correct your child’s answers
  D-Direct your child to repeat your response.
  o L-Leer el cuento, parando para hacer preguntas
  E-Escuchar y evaluar las respuestas de su hijo/a.
  E-Extender las respuestas de su hijo/a o hacer una corrección
  R-Repetir. Dirigir que su hijo/a repite su respuesta.
• Provide a list of the “wh” question words, and sample questions, emphasizing that this produces the greater responses from our children than questions that allow for “yes/no” answers. (Whitehurst, Arnold, et al. 1994).

Practice and Challenge
• Have parents pair up, choose one of the earlier books provided, and practice reading and asking “wh” questions of the listener.

• Encourage parents to find two books to read to their child during the next week and practice reading and asking “wh” questions. Invite them to attend the first coaching session the following week to practice their skills and ask questions.
On the other side of the door
I can be a different me,
As smart and as brave and as funny or strong
As a person could want to be.
There’s nothing too hard for me to do,
There’s no place I can’t explore
Because everything can happen
On the other side of the door.

On the other side of the door
I don’t have to go alone.
If you come, too, we can sail tall ships
And fly where the wind has flown.
And wherever we go, it is almost sure
We’ll find what we’re looking for
Because everything can happen
On the other side of the door.

- Jeff Moss
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title/Título</th>
<th>Number of pages /Número de páginas</th>
<th>Description of pictures/ descripción de los imágenes</th>
<th>Type of book/Género del libro</th>
<th>Why do you like it?/¿Qué le gusta a Ud. del libro?</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Resource 2-3: “Wh” questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question word</th>
<th>Example response</th>
<th>Palabra de pregunta</th>
<th>Respuesta ejemplar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who?</strong></td>
<td>The girl is holding the cat.</td>
<td>¿Quién?</td>
<td>La niña lo está llevando el gato.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who is holding the</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cat?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What?</strong></td>
<td>A dog is in the cage.</td>
<td>¿Qué?</td>
<td>Un perro está en el jaula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is in the cage?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When?</strong></td>
<td>The cat can go home when it is better.</td>
<td>¿Cuándo?</td>
<td>El gato puede regresar a la casa cuando mejore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When can the cat go</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where?</strong></td>
<td>They are at the veterinarian’s office.</td>
<td>¿Dónde?</td>
<td>Ellas están en la oficina de la veterinaria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are they?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why?</strong></td>
<td>She is a veterinarian and the medicine is to help the cat.</td>
<td>¿Por qué?</td>
<td>Ella es la veterinaria y el medicina es para curar al gato.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why is the woman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holding medicine?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How?</strong></td>
<td>I don’t know how the cat got sick.</td>
<td>¿Cómo?</td>
<td>No sé como se pusó enfermo el gato.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the cat get</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sick?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Coaching Session #1

Materials

• Sequencing cards-sets of cards of events with 3 steps of an event
• Word play songs and CD player
• Blank calendars, cards with days of the week, times, and reading times for each family.
• 1 glue stick per family
• 1 coach for every 2 families

Introduction

(20 minutes)

• As families enter, give them a card showing a picture of an event. Families must find two other groups that have related cards and see if they can put the events in order. Parents’ role will be to ask questions; children must manipulate the cards.
• Parents will be given a questionnaire to share their experiences reading with their children since the second workshop. Coaches can be available to help fill out the questionnaire for those who would like help. This questionnaire can remain anonymous and is merely intended to assess parents’ needs and questions they may have. While children wait, lead them in the alphabet song and word play songs.
• Provide blank calendars to families with cards to glue on days of the week, times, and reading times. Model an already completed calendar and how it can be created as a family to schedule reading times. This can be created while parents await a coach.

Book selection

Remind parents of the different kinds of books and the importance of child selection. Send families a group or two at a time to choose a book for the reading time.

Initial book reading
Parent will read the selected book to the child, about five to ten minutes.

**Dialogic reading**

Parents will reread the story to their child and practice asking questions as they read. This should take about fifteen minutes. Coaches will be available to take notes on questions asked and child’s responses as the parent reads with their child. When finished, the coach will share observations with parents, making parents aware of their interactions. A good coach should remember that parents are the teachers and treat them with the respect they deserve by involving them in a dialogue about the time and brainstorming areas for improvement. Children at this time will return to music time. If parents do not want to be shadowed, coaches will be available for questions from parents during the process as well.

**Questions**

Presenter will glean any questions from the questionnaire and lead a short discussion with parents before leaving, addressing the important issues.
Coaching Resource 1-1: Questionnaire

**Book Selection/Selección de libros**

1. Where did you select books from?  
   home the library the store other
   ¿De dónde escogiste libros? la casa la biblioteca la tienda otro lugar

2. Was your child able to find books he/she liked?  
   yes no
   ¿Podía su hijo/a escoger libros que le gustaba? sí no

**Reading time/Tiempo de leer**

4. How many times did you practice reading since we last met?  
   0 1-2 3-5 6+
   ¿Cuántos veces practice leer usted desde la última vez que nos juntamos?

5. What was easy about the process?  
   ¿Cuál parte del proceso era fácil?

6. What was hard about the process?  
   ¿Cuál parte del proceso era difícil?

7. Do you have any questions?  
   ¿Tiene algunas preguntas usted?
Coaching Resource 1-2: Calendar parts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lunes</td>
<td>martes</td>
<td>miércoles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jueves</td>
<td>viernes</td>
<td>sábado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>viernes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>morning</th>
<th>afternoon</th>
<th>evening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>la mañana</td>
<td>la tarde</td>
<td>la noche</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>reading time</th>
<th>reading time</th>
<th>reading time</th>
<th>library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tiempo para leer</td>
<td>tiempo para leer</td>
<td>tiempo para leer</td>
<td>la biblioteca</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coaching Resource 1-3: Coaches’ Feedback form

Parent name:_________________________ Child name:_________________________

Coach’s name:_________________________

Book Selection Process

How much freedom was the child given to select a book?

__________________________________________________________________________

What type of book was chosen?__________________________________________________________________________

Initial Book Reading

Describe the level of engagement by the child to the parent and to the book.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Dialogic Reading

Write down questions asked, children’s responses, and parent follow-up

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

How many questions were asked? _____________________________________________

Were questions asked that required more than yes/no answers? _____________________

When the child gave an answer, how well did the parent engage with their child’s response?

__________________________________________________________________________

Other comments:__________________________________________________________________________
Workshop #3

Materials

- copies of the poem, “Open a Book”
- *El Baúl de Mis Amigos*
- *Chicken Little, El Cielo se Está Cayendo* by Steven Kellogg
- copies of Dialogic reading prompts

Introduction

(10 minutes)

- Pass out and read, “Open a Book” aloud (Baskwill). Invite parents to share with their tables how the poem talks about their recent experiences reading with their children.
- Explain that the purpose of today’s workshop is to extend what we have already learned about dialogic reading.

Training

(45 minutes)

- Pass out books to pairs of parents. Display READ/LEER and ask parents to practice the process with a partner. Give 5 minutes to each partner. They do not need to finish the book, merely have time to remember the process.
  - **R**-Read the story, stopping to ask questions.
  - **E**-Evaluate your child’s answers
  - **A**-Add to or correct your child’s answers
  - **D**-Direct your child to repeat your response.
  - **L**-Leer el cuento, parando para hacer preguntas
  - **E**-Escuchar y evaluar las respuestas de su hijo/a.
  - **E**-Extender las respuestas de su hijo/a o hacer una corrección
R-Repetir. Dirigir que su hijo/a repite su respuesta.

- When finished, open up discussion for questions or comments about the process.
- Explain that now that they know the process, it is time to challenge themselves to think deeper about the questions they ask their children. Share that different kinds of questioning is appropriate for different types of books and purposes.
- Provide parents with Resource 3-2 which provides the different types of prompting. Explain how the top row is familiar as it is the same model we have used and how the left sided columns are the extended prompting techniques. Model each of the 5 prompting techniques and the type of book that could be used for it.
- Use the following books (or books with the same genres and quality) to walk through the different prompting techniques. If teaching a Spanish speaking group of parents, use books from “Colección el Baúl.” These books are simple to read, are for preschool age children, teach subject specific vocabulary, and often aid in the prompting. They are also available at the Public Library.
- Read El Baúl de Mis Amigos to the group (Gutierrez, 2004). Read it through once, then as you read it again, stop before reading the rhyming word and prompt parents to say the words for you. Share with them that this prompting is called, Complete/Completar. This engages children in reading and helps them learn rhyming. It can also be used with pattern books that repeat or build upon themes. Use this book also to teach,
  
  Connect/Conectar. This prompting technique draws children into the book by helping them to connect what they read to their own world. This book provides simple questions designed to help kids connect to their own life. Share with parents that while books might provide these questions, they should be able to ask their own questions of their children since they are the experts on their children’s experiences and interests. Often
children will choose books that are interesting to them and that already connect to their own world.

It works in reverse also. After reading a book, parents can look for examples of things in the child’s world that connect to books they have read. A common example for young boys is books about trucks. They may read about different kinds of trucks and later see some of those trucks out on the road. The parent who has been reading with their child can then remind them that they read about such trucks in a book, helping their child make valuable connections to books.

- Read the class a storybook with clear characters, plot, and interesting photos. A useful book could be *Chicken Little, El Cielo Se Está Cayendo* by Steven Kellogg (1985). This book is available in English and Spanish, and a classic story that children will re-encounter in school. As you read, ask “wh” questions to prompt specific vocabulary or clarification. This would be considered, **Create answers to “wh” questions/Contestar preguntas con respuestas.** Steven Kellogg’s beautiful illustrations also call for open-ended questions that would help children to describe a character, make a prediction, or elaborate on the story. This prompt falls under, **Comment on open-ended questions/Contestar preguntas abiertas.** Finally, since there is a clear plot, and a simple repeatable one at that, ask listeners to *(re)Call/(re)Contar* what is happening in the story throughout and at the end. Suggest that this prompt could even be used to have the child retell the story in their own words as they look through the pictures. Ask parents how they could have their children **complete** and **connect** to this story as well. *(complete—“¡El cielo se está cayendo!” or connect—Remember when we ate turkey for Thanksgiving? or Look at that helicopter; didn’t we see one in the sky the other day?)*. Validate parents’ ideas.

- Open up for questions about the different prompts.
**Practice and Challenge**

(20 minutes)

- Allow parents to find a book from the workshop library that they would like to take home and read with their child. Instruct them to take the time to read the book and use their chart to determine what prompts would be appropriate for them to use with the book they selected. Encourage them to write down 5-10 questions they will ask their children as they read the books.

- Send the books home with parents to practice.
Resource 3-1:

**Open A Book**
*by Jane Baskwill*

Open a book
And you will find
People and places of every kind
Open a book
And you can be
Anything that you want to be
Open a book
And you can share
Wondrous worlds you find in there
Open a book
And I will too
You read to me
And I'll read to you.

---

**Abre un Libro**
de Jane Baskwill

Abre un libro
y encontrarás
Personas y lugares de cada tipo
Abre un libro
y puedes ser
Cualquier persona que quieres ser;
Abre un libro
y puedes compartir
Mundos maravillosos que encuentras adentro.
Abre un libro
Y yo también lo abriré
Lee a mi
Y yo te leo a ti.
## Resource 3-2: Dialogic Reading Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Type of book</th>
<th>Read/Leer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete/Completar</td>
<td>Rhyming</td>
<td>Have your child complete a rhyme, sentence, repeated phrase, etc…</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Re)call/(Re)contar</td>
<td>Storybook-narrative</td>
<td>Ask your child to recall/summarize what has happened in the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment on open-ended questions/Contestar preguntas abiertas</td>
<td>Book with detailed pictures</td>
<td>Give your child an open-ended question to comment upon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create answers to wh-questions/Contestar preguntas</td>
<td>Any book</td>
<td>Ask “wh” questions to check for understanding and practice vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect/Conectar</td>
<td>Book with detailed pictures and a story</td>
<td>Ask questions that will help your child make connections to their own lives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coaching Session #2

Materials

• staplers, a ream of blank white paper, pencils, crayons
• 1 coach for every 2 families
• Finger play songs
• Copies of the “Dialogic Reading Planning Page” for each parent

Introduction

(20 minutes)

• Model a completed parent/child book. The book should be all handwritten, drawn, and colored. The pages can have predictable sentences such as “blue-This is a blue truck.” or “three-There are three ducks.”
• Encourage parents to pick a theme such as colors, numbers, shapes, or places and to follow a predictable sentence pattern. Provide models around the room. Make sure to provide models of wordless books for parents as well.
• Parents will work together with their children to make their own take home book.
• Explain how this simple activity practices concepts of print and uses their child’s imagination.

Book selection

Allow parents to choose a selection of two to three books that might interest their child but with the specific prompting they will use in mind. Their children will choose the book from their selections.

Initial book reading

Parent will read the selected book to the child, about five to ten minutes.
Dialogic reading

- Separate the parents from their children. One coach will lead the children in songs and finger play such as “The Itsy Bitsy Spider” while the other coach will help prepare parents for their second reading. Give parents a planning sheet to aid them in thinking through the prompts they will ask their children. Explain that this is a useful tool but should be used less and less as they become familiar with the process. Prompting should become a more natural activity that can happen with any book. Be available to answer questions and suggestions as parents create prompts.

- When parents are satisfied with their preparation, or after about 10 minutes, return children to their parents for the reading and prompting time.

- Coaches will be available to take notes on questions asked and child’s responses as the parent reads with his/her child. When finished, the coach will share observations with parents, making parents aware of their interactions. A good coach should remember that parents are the teachers and treat them with the respect they deserve by involving them in a dialogue about the time and brainstorming areas for improvement. Children at this time will return to music time. If parents do not want to be shadowed, coaches will be available for questions from parents during the process as well.

Questions

Use this time for parents to ask any more questions they may have about the process. Also, be open to suggestions or requests for further workshops or coaching sessions.
Title of book/Título del libro: ____________________________

Genre of book/Género del libro: ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page/Página</th>
<th>Type of Question/Tipo de Pregunta</th>
<th>Question/Pregunta</th>
<th>Expected answer/Respuesta esperada</th>
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Coaching Resource 2-2: Coaches’ Feedback Form #2

Parent name: ____________________________  Child name: ____________________________
Coach’s name: ____________________________

Book Selection Process

How much freedom was the child given to select a book?
________________________________________________________________________________

What type of book was chosen? ______________________________________________________

Initial Book Reading

Describe the level of engagement by the child to the parent and to the book.
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Dialogic Reading

Write down the prompts given, children’s responses, and parent follow-up
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

What different prompts were used? __________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Did the parent vary the prompts throughout? __________________________________________

Other comments: ________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
References


Whitehurst, G. J. The dialogic reading method. Read Together, Talk Together. Professor of Psychology and Pediatrics, SUNY, Stony Brook