

1993

## **Family reading circles (circulos literarios de familia): Supporting literacy development among English learners**

Jolinda Kae Curtin

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FAMILY READING CIRCLES (*CIRCULOS LITERARIOS DE FAMILIA*):  
SUPPORTING LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AMONG ENGLISH LEARNERS

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Education: Reading

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by  
Jolinda Kae Curtin  
June 1993

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## ABSTRACT

This curriculum project was developed to provide support for literacy development among English learners and their families. The author and a large Hispanic family co-constructed a curriculum consisting of six literacy sessions designed to maximize the potential of culture and native language. The project promotes the collaboration of monolingual teachers and English learners to expand their knowledge of cultures, languages and multiple literacies under the guidance of bilingual whole language teacher. The participants become protagonists of their own learning by planning the growth of both personal and community literacy. The inclusion whole language strategy lessons is designed to generate a more accessible curriculum for English learners and their teachers.

At the end of the project, the participants concluded that biliteracy is a powerful tool that is given too little emphasis in school literacy programs. It is hoped that this project may help others to connect the cultural and linguistic resources of English learners and their families to the school.

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\* Their names of have been changed to protect their right to privacy.

There is no possibility of teaching without learning;  
there is no possibility of learning without teaching.

Paulo Freire (1993)

#### Statement of the Problem

The challenge of California schools today is to provide an excellent academic experience to an increasingly diverse student population. In 1990 there were 742,000 Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in California, or 14 percent of the total kindergarten through grade twelve enrollment (Bilingual Education Handbook (BEH), 1990). In one local school district, there are 30 languages represented by over 3,000 English learners. There are fewer than 25 credentialed bilingual teachers to serve those students. The scarcity of trained bilingual teachers has created the need for schools to develop additional, non-traditional resources for English learners. Researchers are learning that the families of English learners can provide a rich background of native language experiences that will contribute to the development of literacy in both home and school contexts.

This family literacy project will develop a curriculum that will empower families of English learners to use their language and culture to create a strong home-school connection for school success. The collaborative nature of the project will provide a setting in which monolingual teachers can learn more about students' language, culture

and literacy. It is extremely important for culturally and linguistically different children to participate in activities that help them share their experiences with others. David and Yvonne Freeman (1991) suggest that "it is especially important for teachers with bilingual students to make their classrooms learner-centered" (p. 7).

Since the **average** student requires five to seven years to become Fluent English Proficient (California State Department of Education (CSDE), 1981), it is likely that some support will be necessary to achieve the same level of comprehension as that of a native English speaker. While the student is learning English, it is important that knowledge and experiences are gained in literature, science, social science, fine arts and other content areas. In traditional bilingual education settings, these experiences are provided by bilingual teachers and paraprofessionals in the native, or primary, language. Traditional bilingual methodology establishes literacy in the primary language and then transitions the learner to English literacy. Krashen and Biber (1988) conclude that achievement of higher levels of literacy in the first language will accelerate the development of literacy in English. However, the children in some year-round schools will not have the opportunity to participate in a traditional bilingual program. Some year-round programs were implemented with heterogeneous placement of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and bilingual

teachers. There is no continuity of bilingual staffing on any of the five tracks at each school. Primary language support is extremely important to the development of the Common Underlying Proficiency or CUP (CSDE, 1981). In this discussion of the CUP Model, Cummins asserts that there is an interdependence of language skills in bilinguals that allows for the transfer of knowledge between languages. The knowledge that is developed in the primary language is transferred to the second language when there is sufficient Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). For example, if a student has grasped the concept of photosynthesis in Spanish and has developed the academic language attached to that concept, s/he simply changes the labels to the second language and has no need to relearn the concept.

In a school where an English-only curriculum is mandated due to a lack of bilingual teachers, primary language support in the form of native language materials and active parent participation can enrich the learning environment of English learners. This kind of support will contribute to the Common Underlying Proficiency that develops in both languages, allowing the student to experience greater success in the English curriculum.

The development of biliteracy can be achieved with the support of bilingual teachers, parents, community members and para-professionals. It is not certain that teacher

preparation programs can train enough bilingual (or multilingual) teachers to implement bilingual programs for all the children who need them. However, by empowering parents to work at home with their children in the home language, at least partial biliteracy may be achieved. Also, the alienation that occurs when the parents do not speak the same language as the school personnel can be lessened when the school enlists their help.

There is an overwhelming need for monolingual teachers to devise strategies that will give linguistically diverse students better access to a quality program of education. There is an abundance of data available to support the implementation of Spanish literacy programs in the early grades (BEH, 1990; Cummins, 1989; Ramírez, 1990), but there is very little information about how to empower these students in schools that have little or no bilingual staff. To further complicate matters, we are encountering multiple languages in our classrooms, with up to ten being spoken in one classroom. In one year-round school, there are 250 LEP students on 5 different tracks and a staff of 2 credentialed bilingual teachers; a traditional bilingual program that must guarantee Spanish reading instruction until the third grade is not possible. If monolingual teachers can begin to use parents, paraprofessionals and bilingual materials to provide primary language support, there is at least a hope for biliteracy development. At the very least, the

increased comprehensible input will help those students succeed in their English curriculum. With a national dropout rate of 52% among Hispanics ("California Hispanic," 1992), communities must reform schools so that programs engage students in purposeful learning that builds school success.

Goodman (1986) makes a powerful statement: "Limitations on literacy, or on its uses, became limitations on social and personal power" (p. 12). This project will be developed to address the limitations on literacy that currently exist for English learners in our schools. The curriculum will be centered upon four key constructs: (a) accessible curriculum, (b) social contexts for learning, (c) positive transfer of knowledge from L<sub>1</sub> to L<sub>2</sub>, and (d) supportive home learning environments.

#### Theoretical Foundation

In the whole language model, the reader uses graphic, syntactic and semantic cues to bring meaning to a whole chunk of language. No one cueing system is seen as more important than another; the reader uses all three to predict, confirm and integrate meaning. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are seen as natural elements of literacy development. Print is an extension of speech and neither is deemed prime.

The teacher is a facilitator who creates a print-rich environment where literacy can develop naturally. Smith

(1985) states that reading cannot be taught, but that children "learn to read by reading" (p. 7). Children are encouraged to read for meaning, rather than concentrating on individual words. A whole language literacy program is likely to use predictable books, literature, and journal writing. Writing for a variety of purposes is included as a natural and logical process. Students are not expected to complete workbooks and worksheets that stress skills in isolation. Evaluation is based heavily on teacher observation and authentic assessment. Checklists of reading and writing behaviors are kept for each student; individual portfolios of longitudinal writing samples are maintained. Baskwill and Whitman (1988) observe that anecdotal record keeping emphasized the positive strengths of students and made them "first-hand observers of the literacy milestones of . . . students." In addition, the Reading Miscue Inventory (RMI) is used to assess reading strategies and to evaluate types of miscues.

#### Literature Review

A review of the current literature was completed in the order of the following four assumptions that form the foundation of the project:

1. Whole language methods provide a learner-centered curriculum that is more accessible and appropriate for English learners because it creates a strong connection between background

- knowledge, or schemata, and new knowledge.
2. Teachers who create authentic social contexts for learning will be enriched by the multicultural diversity of their students and their families. They may begin to transform their traditional deficit views of LEP students.
  3. Bilingual students and their families bring a rich diversity of language and experience to the classroom that transfers positively to the English curriculum.
  4. Parents of English learners are interested, supportive partners in the education of their children when a nurturing environment for that partnership is fostered by the school and community.

#### Accessible curriculum

In respect to the first assumption, a curriculum must be implemented that gives equal access to all students, despite their cultural and linguistic differences. At the opening session of the 1993 CABE conference, Terry Delgado, CABE President, said: "There is no learning if you cannot understand the language of instruction." Unfortunately, though some programs offered primary language instruction, the materials and methods were not equal to those of the mainstream. Past bilingual methods separated students into linguistic groupings (English and Spanish) for much of the

school day. The materials provided for the Spanish speakers were inevitably inferior to those for the English curriculum. In the late 1980's, when most mainstream students were immersed in literature-based reading programs, the Spanish reading materials were still focusing on word identification (Freeman, 1988). Flores, Cousin, and Díaz (1991) found that "at risk" students were often separated from the mainstream and given a curriculum that focused on subskills. The English learners, who need a whole, comprehensible context for learning, were given fragmented lessons that limited "opportunities to practice the whole process" (Flores et al., 1991, p. 372).

The implementation of the California English-Language Arts Framework (1987) opened a market for children's literature in the native languages of our diverse student population. This wealth of native folk tales, poetry, and universal fairy tales such as Cinderella has allowed students to hear and develop their native language within a rich context of imaginative, stirring literature. Good literature expands the experience of readers, allowing them to reflect upon their experiences and appreciate beautiful language (Ada, 1990). This world of literature was closed to speakers of languages other than English until the framework mandated a literature-based language arts program that "is intended not only for English-speaking students but also for language-minority students" (p. 22).

Often the methods and materials in a traditional mainstream American classroom were not appropriate to the majority of Hispanic children in the classroom. Ramírez and Castañeda (1974) remark that the traditional Mexican American society "requires the individual to respond using communication, human-relational, incentive-motivational, and learning styles of the field-sensitive mode." Many children do not respond positively in an environment of individual seating where they are awarded for avoiding contact with the teacher and other students.

Instead, teachers of English learners might learn whole language theory that is based on the social aspects of language and study its implications for the bilingual classroom. The unique and varied experiences of multilingual students and their families are welcomed and validated in a classroom where literacy events occur daily in the language that the child chooses to use. Weaver (1988) states that "schemas develop as we transact with the external world" and "we may often lack appropriate schemas for understanding what we hear or read." Since students participate in the selection of curriculum materials in a whole language classroom, there is a higher correlation between their existing schemas and the curriculum. In a more traditional classroom, the teacher may or may not select materials that are appropriate to the children's culture and experience; therefore the curriculum may or may

not be comprehensible and appropriate. Due to heterogeneous grouping and literature study, English learners are given equal access to "the same high-quality instruction, high expectations for student performance, and meaningful materials and activities" that is mandated in the California English-Language Arts Framework (1987).

Sheltered English instruction, a method that uses visual aids and other strategies to increase comprehensible input, goes hand-in-hand with the predictable, patterned language that is found in whole language practices. Heald-Taylor (1989) states that the benefits of a whole language approach for ESL learners are many. Besides facilitating growth in both the first and second languages, the learners can "participate in all language activities regardless of their level of proficiency in English." Heald-Taylor also proposes that because the approach is child-centered, it causes learners to "use language to think and seek meaning" and to "use his/her developing English in the reading and writing process right from the start" (p. 3).

#### Social contexts for learning

Assumption 2: Teachers who create authentic social contexts for learning will be enriched by the multicultural diversity of their students and their families. They may begin to transform their traditional deficit views of LEP students.

Cummins (1989) maintains that "a genuine multicultural

orientation is impossible within a transmission model of pedagogy." It seems imperative, therefore, to train all teachers of English learners in the empowering pedagogy of whole language. Cummins asserts that traditional approaches "systematically exclude . . . minority students' experiences from the curriculum and the classroom." When students and teachers work together to plan lessons in a Theme Cycle (Harste, Short & Burke, 1988), the diverse experiences of all the students are included and valued. The empowerment that Cummins advocates is more than an affirmation of the language and culture of the students in the classroom (Hayes, Bahruth & Kessler, 1991). It is a transformation of the teacher who becomes a learner in the classroom, a collaborator in a social context of learning, and a guide to critical thinking and reflection.

The Institute for Education in Transformation at Claremont is developing a "transcultural pedagogy" that Poplin (1992) describes as a methodology that will "engage all students, regardless of their background." Transcultural pedagogy implies a sharing of experience, language and information across cultures. The teacher acknowledges that there are many ways to read and view the world and values the contributions of all students, even if the answer does not match the teacher's guide. By allowing the script of the teacher's guide to dominate the curriculum, the teacher hears only one voice in the

classroom - the voice of the textbook publisher. By encouraging students to offer critical analysis and evaluation, the teacher hears many voices in the classroom - the voices of diverse cultures.

Freire (1986) states that the teacher who "adheres rigidly to the routines set forth in teaching manuals" is inhibiting the freedom of teacher and students to "exercise critical intelligence." The restriction of that freedom also blinds the teacher to the knowledge that students bring to the classroom. For example, if the social studies text is presenting cows as the source of milk, the teacher may never find out that Ahmad's Pakistani family taught him vast amounts of information about goat husbandry. However, he does not recognize the cow as a source of milk. The result is that the teacher, following the social studies text, does not learn about Ahmad's existing knowledge and he does not make the connection to the school's idea of milk production.

When Ahmad fails to "make the connection," it may reinforce the teacher's lower expectations for culturally and/or linguistically diverse students. Olmedo (1992) discusses the false assumptions that teachers make about bilingual students. Lacking a firm knowledge base of bilingualism, cross-cultural values, and successful bilingual programs, teachers operate under a deficit model. They assume that bilingual students have "deficient language systems" and consequently, they lower their expectations for

academic achievement.

This view of language deficiency is reinforced by inaccurate language proficiency testing that often misrepresents the students' potential for communication in both English and the primary language. All of the instruments such as the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM), the Language Assessment Scales (LAS), and the Idea Proficiency Test (IPT), test parts of language outside of meaningful contexts. Students are often called upon to label pictures that are unclear or unknown in their culture. It is not unusual for a student to appear alingual, or having no language, because s/he has non-speaking level results in both English and his/her native language. Of course, this finding is erroneous except among rare cases of neurologically impaired children. Freeman and Freeman (1992a) state that these tests violate the principles of whole language learning and affix a negative label to students that persists throughout their school career.

Another important tool in learning the potential that English learners bring to the classroom is alternative evaluation such as portfolios and "kidwatching." Freeman and Freeman (1992b) have observed teachers who document "the amazing progress second learners often make" by using anecdotal observations and portfolio assessment. Teachers develop "faith in the learner" by systematically reviewing progress rather than relying on standardized test scores and

other culturally-biased methods of assessment.

It is important to note that while teachers can learn much by encouraging student voice in the curriculum, it is also important to avail themselves of professional development classes that are available through local and state teacher training programs. The new Crosscultural Language and Academic Development (CLAD) credential will require teachers who work with limited English proficient students to study second language theory, bilingual and ESL methods, and multicultural education (Walton, 1992).

Positive transfer of knowledge from L<sub>1</sub> to L<sub>2</sub>

Assumption 3: Bilingual students and their families bring a rich diversity of language and experience to the classroom that transfers positively to the English curriculum.

Past practices in compensatory education programs discounted the value of the home environment of language minority students. The term "culturally deprived" was used to justify programs that provided additional materials and instruction for students who did not perform at expected levels on standardized tests. School resources were allocated to provide experiences that would narrow the gap between the students' background and the school curriculum. Multicultural programs were aligned with the contributions or additive approaches described by Banks (1989).

These approaches honored other cultures by adding

ethnic celebrations and multicultural information without changing the content or delivery of the traditional school curriculum. This was a good beginning, but neither of these approaches is transformational in nature. In order for students (and teachers) to understand events and issues from different cultural perspectives, the curriculum must become learner-centered. In the theme cycle approach described by Harste, Short and Burke (1988), students and teachers combine their knowledge and experiences to negotiate curriculum. Reading and writing are used to learn about topics upon which both students and teachers have agreed.

The inclusion of diverse student voices in the curriculum will connect prior knowledge and experience with current and future learning. The activation of appropriate schemata has been problematic for second language learners. A 1991 comparison of English reading comprehension scores (Garcia, 1991) between Hispanic second-language readers and Anglo monolingual readers found that second-language readers often interpreted passages literally and activated erroneous schemata. This finding suggests that teachers must allow time to listen to their students' voices and include their diverse experiences when planning units of study with students.

Including multicultural literature in units of study will help students learn the myths, fables and literary traditions of different cultures. Norton (1990) explains

that studying the values of different cultures helps students understand different beliefs that emerge from the common problems that every human society must solve. The positive portrayal of ethnic minorities will help culturally and linguistically diverse students develop more confidence (Lalas, 1991).

This is especially beneficial for newly arrived immigrant students, who cling to these familiar symbols of their homeland when they are adrift in maelstrom of strange words and customs. A cross-cultural study of classic fairy tales, for example, is a way of including many perspectives of classic characters. For example, the story of Cinderella is told all over the world in many cultures. A teacher who invites students to bring their Cinderella stories to the classroom, either in print or oral storytelling, is inviting children to think critically, develop multiple perspectives, and broaden their knowledge of the world.

The concept of multiple literacies is new to most teachers. In the past, teachers were more likely to encourage communicative and interpretive processes that led to an understanding of school subjects (Gallego & Hollingsworth, 1992). This school literacy sometimes matched well with students' personal and community literacies, but a significant number of students were mismatched and performed poorly in school settings.

The literacy events that occur in their personal lives

and in their community are not viewed as appropriate in a school setting. Graffiti is a very visible example of a literacy event that young children see in their neighborhoods, imitate in their own writing and read as part of their community literacy. The messages are often important indicators of personal safety in neighborhoods where gang warfare erupts over graffiti. When the children enter school, however, this form of communication is severely condemned. It is not viewed as a literacy event, but rather as a public nuisance of no value whatsoever. Very few people would want to encourage graffiti, but understanding its role in community literacy may help teachers create writing programs that integrate authentic literacy experiences at home with writing tasks at school.

As previously mentioned in the introduction of this paper, there has been ample research (Cummins 1984, 1989) to show that cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) transfers to from first to second languages. Another study by Royer and Carlo (1991) confirms Cummins' hypothesis by testing the transfer of reading skills learned in Spanish to English reading. The learned educational strategies transferred positively about one year later from the Spanish reading program to the English reading program as students developed proficiency in English. Therefore, it would seem prudent to encourage literacy in the native language through bilingual and sheltered English programs. In schools with

limited resources for primary language support, parent education programs can provide continuity of primary language support.

#### Supportive home learning environments

Assumption 4: Parents of English learners are interested, supportive partners in the education of their children. When a nurturing environment for that partnership is fostered by the school and community, student achievement and self-esteem increase.

Another "deficit myth" that Flores et al. document is the belief that "at risk" children come from unsupportive homes that limit their school success. They cite research that explodes that myth and suggest that parents of these students are not only interested in their children's schooling, but can become effective partners in that education.

A national study of Hispanic parents and teachers conducted by Nicolau and Ramos (1990) examined attitudes of participants in 42 parent involvement projects. They concluded that Hispanic parents were unfamiliar with the participatory role that American educators expect parents to play in their child's education. Conversely, American educators incorrectly assumed that Hispanic parents did not care because they did not ask questions, attend conferences, or otherwise meet American standards of parent participation.

When more culturally familiar formats were presented to parents, such as "Cafés de Amistad" (Friendship Coffees), Hispanic parents attended and asked many questions that both revealed a lack of knowledge of the American school system and concern about the education of their children (Flores et al., 1991). Schools that encourage this kind of dialogue between Hispanic parents and schools report positive results in teacher attitudes, student achievement and parent participation (Bermúdez & Padrón, 1988). They studied 77 parents and teachers from a large, inner-city school district who participated in a university-school district program of ESL and parent education. The teachers were enrolled in a graduate course to integrate parent education into the teacher training curriculum. Teacher attitudes were measured by analyzing the field notes kept by the teachers; the researchers concluded that 80% of the teachers had a positive change of attitude toward minority parents. English language arts and reading tests were administered by a group of 46 Hispanic students ages 5-6, 23 of whom came from families who were participating in the program. Student achievement was significantly increased, as measured by English language arts and reading tests. Parents responded to a parental involvement questionnaire before and after their participation in the program. An analysis of variables (Attitude, Participation and Duties) revealed a statistically significant increase. They concluded that

teacher training programs must look at both preservice and inservice programs that develop knowledge and cultural sensitivity to multicultural populations and family involvement.

Other researchers at the University of Michigan (Caplan, Choy & Whitmore, 1992) looked at Indochinese refugee families whose children have achieved remarkable success in inner-city schools, demonstrated by a mean grade point average of 3.05. This achievement is even more remarkable since at the time of the study in the early 1980's the youngsters had been in the United States an average of only three and a half years. They knew little or no English and the recent events in Vietnam had inflicted both physical and emotional trauma. Twenty-seven percent of the families had four or more children, and lived in low-income, metropolitan areas. Their educational background was meager due to the disruption of educational services during the war.

These researchers were puzzled by this remarkable achievement, which contradicted several assumptions about socioeconomic status, second language proficiency and large families. They surmised that perhaps it was cultural values and background transmitted through the family that accounted for the academic success. By searching Asian literature and social science research for cultural values, they devised a questionnaire that asked parents to rate the importance of

the values they had uncovered. These values were embedded in Confucian and Buddhist religions common to the Indochinese area; they are passed down from one generation to another through family traditions and literature.

An analysis of the questionnaires divulged central themes of mutual respect and obligation to one another and commitment to cooperation and harmony within the family. Academic achievement was seen as bringing honor upon the family; the parents set high expectations for their children and set aside time for every member to sit together after dinner to do homework. Siblings help one another with assignments, parents read aloud to their children, and household chores are completed by parents who deem schoolwork more important than doing dishes. These values strengthen the home-school connection and promote academic success. In addition to exhorting schools to "reach out to families and engage them meaningfully in the education of their children" (p. 42), the authors of this study conclude that:

We firmly believe that for American schools to succeed, parents and families must become more committed to the education of their children. They must instill a respect for education and create within the home an environment conducive to learning. They must also participate in the process so that their children feel comfortable learning and go to school willing and

prepared to study (p. 276).

Teachers must learn that the everyday experiences of children are valuable and should be honored by in the school literacy program. Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) learned that the emerging literacy behaviors of young ghetto students were not connected to school literacy events. For example, a youngster might already be writing "I love you" notes to family members before entering school, but at school is expected to write repetitive lists of unfamiliar spelling words. In the inner-city schools that they visited, the home literacy of children was not valued. Teachers were unaware of the literacy skills their students had developed to meet the needs and expectations of their families and neighbors. The opportunity to write about authentic events in their everyday lives was smothered by worksheets, tests and drills that were required in the school system. These researchers concluded that "school policies should enable teachers to create classroom environments in which the nurturing of young children is not separated from their academic instruction" (p. 210). Schools must respect the knowledge and skills that students bring to the learning environment and build upon that intelligence in its curriculum planning and implementation.

## Description of the Project

### Summary of the project

This project will develop a curriculum that identifies and builds upon the strengths of English learners and their families. It will provide open-ended lesson plans that will allow teachers and families to explore their own personal literacy and community literacy. Reading strategies will be included to enhance meaning making for all participants. Specifically, the use of primary language materials will demonstrate a positive transfer of knowledge from L<sub>1</sub> to L<sub>2</sub>, and empower non-English speaking parents to use their native language to provide supportive home learning environments.

The social context of learning will be modeled by the use of "culture circles" such as Paulo Freire has developed in his critical pedagogy (Brown, 1987). The teacher and the students will work collaboratively in a democratic setting. This community of learners will decide themes that are to be explored, determine works to be published, and select works of literature to be enjoyed. The program will not have a determinate length or specified sequence of lessons. The participants will decide on those factors by conducting a needs survey at the beginning of the program. Self-analysis of personal literacy growth will be conducted by each participant and a collective assessment of community literacy growth will be completed by the group.

### Goals

1. To empower English learners and their families to become protagonists of their own learning
2. To utilize more fully the potential of culture and native language to create a strong home-school connection
3. To provide a setting for monolingual teachers to expand their knowledge of cultures, languages and multiple literacies
4. To create communities of learners who will collaborate to transform their world through critical literacy
5. To generate a more accessible curriculum by teaching wholistic reading strategies to teachers and English learners

### Limitations

1. Budget constraints may limit the length of the program and the access to primary language literature.
2. Staffing requirements may be difficult since the program requires a team of at least one bilingual whole language teacher who can team with one or more monolingual teachers.
3. The field test of this program is being conducted with one Hispanic family with seven children, ages preschool through high school. Adjustments to the curriculum that is developed may be required when the project is expanded to a school site.

4. Materials for this program are being developed in English and Spanish. Accomodations for other languages will be made on an as-needed basis.

Evaluation

Assessment will be conducted individually and collectively with the K-W-L (Ogle, 1986) strategy. Participants will reflect on their current literacy development, how they would like to experience growth, and what they learned about their personal and community literacy by the end of the project. Group charts will be developed that will include these personal observations, including those of the teacher. Additionally, an evaluation of each activity will be available for each family to complete at the end of the project.

The teacher will complete an evaluation of the project with respect to the five goals listed above. The second, third and fifth goals involve the teacher's personal growth and will be recorded in a reflections journal. The teacher will evaluate the first, second, fourth and fifth goals by observation of journal writing, group discussions, book sharing and home-school participation. These observations will also be recorded in the reflections journal. A quantitative record of home-school participation indicators such as homework completion, parent conference attendance, parent education participation, volunteerism and PTA participation also may be completed.

The teacher and the students will collaborate in an ongoing assessment of the project including discussions of themes, activities and literature selections. This ongoing assessment will facilitate the co-construction of a curriculum that reflects the needs, background and experience of all participants.

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## **PROJECT**

## Introduction

This project was co-constructed by myself and a large Hispanic family whose names have been changed to respect their right to privacy. I hope as you read this project, you will come to know and respect their wonderful contributions. Their names and ages are listed in the author's notes. We collaborated to develop a curriculum that identifies and builds upon the strengths of English learners and their families. It provides open-ended lesson plans that allow teachers and families to explore their personal literacies and community literacy. We introduced and practiced reading strategies that enhance meaning making for all participants. Together we selected and evaluated primary language reading materials that facilitate a positive transfer of knowledge from L<sub>1</sub> to L<sub>2</sub>, and empower non-English speaking parents to use their native language to provide supportive home learning environments.

To encourage the social context of learning, our group discussions were modeled after the "culture circles" of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy (Brown, 1987). The teacher and the students worked collaboratively in a democratic setting. Our community of learners decided themes to be explored, determined works to be published, and selected works of literature to be enjoyed. The project did not have a determinate length or specified sequence of lessons. These decisions were made collectively by the group as the

project proceeded.

#### Goals

1. To empower English learners and their families to become protagonists of their own learning
2. To utilize more fully the potential of culture and native language to create a strong home-school connection
3. To provide a setting for monolingual teachers to expand their knowledge of cultures, languages and multiple literacies
4. To create communities of learners who will collaborate to transform their world through critical literacy
5. To generate a more accessible curriculum by teaching wholistic reading strategies to teachers and English learners

#### Limitations

1. Budget constraints may limit the length of the project and the access to primary language literature.
2. Staffing requirements may be difficult since the project requires a team of at least one bilingual whole language teacher who can team with one or more monolingual teachers.
3. The field test of this project was conducted with one Hispanic family with seven children, ages preschool through high school. Adjustments to the curriculum may be required when the project is expanded to a

school site.

4. Materials for this project were developed in English and Spanish. Accomodations for other languages will be made on an as-needed basis.

## Project Outline

This is an outline of the project that we developed. The family and I completed all the activities together. For example, I wrote in my journal when everyone else wrote. Then I exchanged journals with a family member and we responded to one another. It is important to note that each Family Reading Circle (Círculos literarios de familia) project may be different due to the interests, background and experiences of the participating families.

We have included lesson plans, strategies and samples that may be helpful. Our sessions generally lasted about one and one half hours and took place in the family home. While the home is the natural site for family learning, we decided that the sessions might also take place in schools or neighborhood centers. We all sat in a circle around the dining room table to facilitate the democratic and social nature of learning. If it is not possible to create a circular seating arrangement, the teacher may want to sit among the students, rather than in front of the group. This will emphasize the fact that the teacher is also a learner in the group.

In our sessions, there was an easy flow of English and Spanish, with many opportunities for cross-language interaction in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Translation occurred spontaneously and naturally during the sessions, with older siblings who are biliterate assisting

parents and young children who are monolingual. This powerful use of biliteracy taught me that we are not using this tool effectively in our classrooms.

We hope that the experiences that we relate here will be of some help as a guide to others who wish to undertake this kind of family literacy project. It has been a rewarding experience for all of us. As Paulo Freire (1993) said, "There is no possibility of teaching without learning; there is no possibility of learning without teaching."

## I. INTRODUCTORY SESSION

- A. Greetings, Interest Surveys and Introductions
- B. Knowledge chart
  - 1. What Do We Know About Reading/Writing?/¿Qué sabemos de lecto-escritura?
  - 2. What Do We Want to Learn About Reading/Writing?/¿Qué queremos aprender de lecto-escritura?
- C. Strategy lesson and discussion
  - 1. Writing for communication
  - 2. Interactive journal writing
- D. Book Box
  - 1. Introduce Book Box of free reading materials
  - 2. Introduce Reading Log

## II. SESSION TWO

- A. Greetings, discussion and evaluation of last session
- B. Interactive journal writing
- C. Book sharing
  - 1. Share Reading Logs
  - 2. Requests for Book Box materials
- D. Strategy lesson and discussion
  - 1. Schemata
  - 2. Publishing book of Family Memories/Memorias de familia
- E. Read-aloud
  - 1. Teacher reads a story from Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia
  - 2. A volunteer is selected for next week's Family Pictures read-aloud story

### III. SESSION THREE

- A. Greetings, discussion and evaluation of last session
  - 1. Check progress on Family Memories stories
  - 2. What worked . . . what didn't
- B. Interactive journal writing
- C. Book sharing
  - 1. Share Reading Logs
  - 2. Requests for Book Box materials
- D. Strategy lesson and discussion
  - 1. Predictable texts
  - 2. Read Love You Forever/Siempre Te Querré and complete a group prediction chart
- E. Read-aloud
  - 1. Volunteer reads a story from Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia
  - 2. A volunteer is selected for next week's Family Pictures read-aloud story

### IV. SESSION FOUR

- A. Greetings, discussion and evaluation of last session
  - 1. Peer editing of final draft of Family Memories stories
  - 2. What worked . . . what didn't
- B. Interactive journal writing
- C. Book sharing
  - 1. Share Reading Logs
  - 2. Requests for Book Box materials
- D. Strategy lesson and discussion

1. Reading wordless picture books
  2. Read the wordless book, Anno's U.S.A., and write responses to one another about each page
- E. Read-aloud
1. Volunteer reads a story from Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia
  2. A volunteer is selected for next week's Family Pictures read-aloud story

V. SESSION FIVE

- A. Greetings, discussion and evaluation of last session
  1. Collect final drafts of Family Memories stories
  2. What worked . . . what didn't
- B. Interactive journal writing
- C. Book sharing
  1. Share and collect Reading Logs to evaluate materials for future Book Boxes
- D. Strategy lesson and discussion
  1. Patterned language
  2. Read/sing the poem, Un elefante se balanceaba/The Graceful Elephant from Arroz con leche
  3. Write and illustrate our favorite childhood songs, chants and poems to include in the Family Memories/Memorias de familia book.
- E. Read-aloud
  1. Teacher reads a story from Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia
  2. Each member chooses a bread from a different culture to share at next week's celebration

## VI. SESSION SIX

- A. Greetings, discussion and evaluation of last session
  - 1. What worked . . . what didn't
    - a. Fill out What We Learned evaluations
    - b. Share plans for future literacy growth
- B. Strategy lesson
  - 1. Reading for information
  - 2. Read Bread, Bread, Bread and share the experience of tasting breads from different cultures
- C. Interactive journal writing
  - 1. Write about the experiences of the project
  - 2. Respond to another member's impressions of the project
- D. Book sharing
  - 1. Return Reading Logs and discuss selections for future Book Boxes
  - 2. Collect Book Box materials
- E. Read-aloud
  - 1. Present published book of Family Memories/Memorias de familia
  - 2. Volunteers read their published stories

## SESSION OVERVIEWS AND STRATEGY LESSONS

### SESSION ONE OVERVIEW

#### ASSESSMENT

Interest surveys will be completed and used by pairs of learners to introduce one another to the group. The learners will be asked, "What do we know about reading and writing?/¿Qué sabemos de lecto-escritura?" All responses are valid and will be recorded. Each response will be recorded on a group knowledge chart with an illustration to help young family members locate and identify the text. Next the learners will be asked, "What do we want to learn about reading and writing?/¿Qué queremos aprender de lecto-escritura?" Another chart will be completed in the same manner as described above. These activities will help develop a sense of community among the learners and lay a foundation for self-analysis of personal and community literacy. Planning the curriculum together will help English learners become protagonists of their own learning and help teachers become aware of the strengths, backgrounds and experiences of learners from other cultures.

#### LITERATURE

A Book Box filled with materials in both English and the primary language will be introduced to the group. A Book Box containing fiction and non-fiction works, wordless books, and magazines will be kept at the home of each

participating family. The teacher will explain that the learners can choose anything from the Book Box and record their impressions on the Reading Log. The Reading Logs will be shared each week.

#### WRITING LESSON

The teacher will pass out blank journals. The teacher and the learners will illustrate and write entries about real events in their lives. Then they will respond to one another in writing, using the language of their choice.

#### MATERIALS

Interest surveys

Knowledge charts (enlarged to poster size)

Writing Logs

Book Box

Blank journals, markers, crayons, pens, pencils

## SESSION ONE STRATEGY LESSON

AREA OF FOCUS Writing for communication

CONCEPT Learners will understand that 1) what they think and say can be communicated in writing to another person and 2) writing is an act of genuine and purposeful communication.

EVALUATION (Why do the learners need this lesson?)

This lesson will strengthen the home-school connection by identifying the value of everyday experiences and the sharing of those experiences in writing. The teacher will learn how to connect school lessons to the lives of students; the students will learn that the teacher is genuinely interested in their family and culture.

INITIATING (How will the teacher set up the lesson and activate the readers' backgrounds?)

The teacher will ask the family if they ever talk to one another about events or experiences that happen in their lives. The teacher will explain that it is possible to talk to one another through written communication. The teacher will emphasize that interactive journal writing is private and because the emphasis is on communication, the journals will not be corrected.

INTERACTING (What will the learners do to interact with the text and use language?)

Each week the participants (including the teacher) will draw

and write in their journals about real events in their lives. Preliterate children will be encouraged to write "their way" or to "pretend to write." Each author will read their own entry to a partner who will respond in writing and then read their response aloud.

EXTENDING (What will the teacher do to extend the lesson beyond the text?)

The teacher will encourage the participants to draw and write daily in their journals. The learners will also keep a Writing Log to increase their awareness of their personal writing purposes.

## SESSION TWO OVERVIEW

### LITERATURE

The learners will choose a story from the book Family Pictures, by Carmen Lomas Garza.

### READING LESSON

The teacher will read aloud a story from Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia by Carmen Lomas Garza. A discussion will be held about how we can use our background and experience to predict meaning when we read.

### WRITING LESSON

The learners will write in their journals about real life experiences and respond to one another in the language of their choice. The learners will begin to write stories for publication in a book of Family Memories/Memorias de familia.

### MATERIALS

Family Stories by Carmen Lomas Garza

Journals, crayons, pens and pencils, blank paper (unlined and lined)

Completed Reading Logs

## SESSION TWO STRATEGY LESSON

### AREA OF FOCUS Schemata

CONCEPT Learners will understand (1) meaning is created when there is a transaction between past and current experiences (2) writing can be used to preserve family traditions over time and space and 3) knowledge can be gained in any language, even though that language may be different than the language of instruction at school.

### EVALUATION (Why do the learners need this lesson?)

This lesson will correct the belief that writing is a process of putting down correctly spaced symbols in good handwriting. It will encourage writing for an authentic purpose.

### INITIATING (How will the teacher set up the lesson and activate the readers' background?)

The teacher will show the cover of the book and read the title. The teacher will ask the learners what they think the book might be about.

### INTERACTING (What will the students do to interact with the text and use language?)

The teacher will read a story from Family Pictures, a collection of stories in English and Spanish about the Texas childhood of the author. The learners will be encouraged to identify their prior knowledge before reading the selection.

EXTENDING (What will the teacher do to extend the lesson beyond the text?)

The learners will discuss the selection and answer these possible questions:

Why do you think the author chose to write about this event?

Do you remember something like this happening in your family?

How do you think the family felt about this event?

Tell me how your family would feel.

Then the learners (including the teacher) will begin to write their own family stories to be published in a Family Memories/Memorias de familia book.

## SESSION THREE OVERVIEW

### LITERATURE

The teacher will read Love You Forever/Siempre Te Querré by Robert Munsch.

### READING LESSON

The teacher will talk about how reading about familiar topics can strengthen the understanding of what is read.

The teacher will emphasize using the ability to predict events and outcomes in order to increase knowledge of language.

### WRITING LESSON

The learners will write in their journals about real life experiences and respond to one another in the language of their choice. The learners will complete a group prediction chart based on the literature selection.

### MATERIALS

Love You Forever/Siempre Te Querré by Robert Munsch

Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia by Carmen Lomas Garza

Journals, crayons, markers, pens and pencils

Blank prediction chart (enlarged to poster size)

Completed Reading Logs

### SESSION THREE STRATEGY LESSON

AREA OF FOCUS Predictable language

CONCEPT Learners will understand (1) prediction increases understanding of print and (2) that writing predictions will strengthen their use of the graphophonic cueing system.

EVALUATION (Why do the learners need this lesson?)

Emerging readers may have good semantic and syntactic strategies, but do not focus on print yet.

INITIATING (How will the teacher set up the lesson and activate the reader's background?)

The teacher will ask the learners if they remember hearing lullabies when they were young. They will look at the first illustration of the book and try to predict what kind of lullaby the mother is singing. A brief discussion will be held about lullabies in different languages and cultures.

INTERACTING (What will the learners do to interact with the text and use language?)

The teacher will read Love You Forever/Siempre Te Querré, an illustrated picture book about a mother and her growing child. The learners will complete a group prediction chart while reading the story.

EXTENDING (What will the teacher do to extend the lesson beyond the text?)

The learners will be encouraged to use prediction skills when reading selections from the Book Box.

## SESSION FOUR OVERVIEW

### LITERATURE

Wordless picture books will be introduced using Anno's U.S.A.

### READING LESSON

The learners will "read" the pictures in Anno's U.S.A. and discuss how wordless books can be used to increase knowledge, regardless of the dominant primary language.

### WRITING LESSON

The learners will write in their journals about real life experiences and respond to one another in the language of their choice. The learners will work in pairs to respond in writing to the historical information contained in the illustrations of Anno's U.S.A.. These written conversations will demonstrate how wordless books can be used to expand written language skills.

### MATERIALS

Anno's U.S.A. by Mitsumaso Anno

Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia by Carmen Lomas Garza

Journals, crayons, pens and pencils, blank paper (unlined and lined)

Completed Reading Logs

Final drafts of Family Memories stories

## SESSION FOUR STRATEGY LESSON

AREA OF FOCUS Wordless picture books

CONCEPT Students will understand that 1) they can extract useful information from wordless picture books and 2) wordless picture books can expand oral and written language, regardless of the dominant primary language.

EVALUATION (Why do the learners need this lesson?)

The learners need to understand that they can gain useful information from a wordless picture book and communicate their ideas with another in writing while expanding their descriptive language skills.

INITIATING (How will the teacher set up the lesson and activate the readers' backgrounds?)

The teacher will explain that the learners are going to look at the book together, but that they are not going to talk aloud. They are going to write down what we want to say about the book, like passing notes in school.

INTERACTING (What will the learners do to interact with the text and use language?)

The learners will read selected pages from Anno's U.S.A.. They will work in pairs, taking turns writing their responses to the historical information in the illustrations.

EXTENDING (What will the teacher do to extend the lesson beyond the text?)

The learners will draw a personal history event in their journals that tells a story without words.

## SESSION FIVE OVERVIEW

### LITERATURE

The teacher will read aloud the poem, "Un elefante se balanceaba/The Graceful Elephant" from Arroz con leche by Lulu Delacre.

### READING LESSON

The learners will chorally read/sing the poem. The teacher will ask them to recall other songs, chants and poems from their childhoods.

### WRITING LESSON

The learners will write in their journals about real life experiences and respond to one another in the language of their choice. The learners will write and illustrate songs, chants and poems from their childhoods to include in the Family Memories book.

### MATERIALS

Arroz con leche by Lulu Delacre

Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia by Carmen Lomas Garza

Journals, crayons, markers, pens and pencils

Completed Reading Logs

Final drafts of Family Memories stories

## SESSION FIVE STRATEGY LESSON

AREA OF FOCUS Patterned language

CONCEPT The learners will understand (1) the patterns of our language have rhythm and figures of speech (2) these patterns can be used to initiate young children into literacy.

EVALUATION (Why do the learners need this lesson?)

Nursery rhymes are highly predictable and easy to memorize. Once memorized, they can be used to make young children aware of print. Nursery rhymes provide an expansion of vocabulary. Young children can appropriate the patterns of language in nursery rhymes to use in their own writing.

INITIATING (How will the teacher set up the lesson and activate the readers' backgrounds?)

The teacher will recite a favorite childhood song, chant or poem and ask the learners if they have ever heard "Un elefante se balanceaba/The Graceful Elephant".

INTERACTING (What will the learners do to interact with the text and use language?)

The teacher and the learners will chorally read/sing "Un elefante se balanceaba/The Graceful Elephant" from Arroz con leche.

EXTENDING (What will the teacher do to extend the lesson beyond the text?)

The learners will illustrate and write their favorite childhood songs, chants and poems to be included in the Family Memories book.

## SESSION SIX OVERVIEW

### LITERATURE

The learners will read Bread, Bread, Bread by Ann Morris.

### READING LESSON

The learners will taste breads from different cultures and read the book, noting the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. The learners will celebrate the publication of their book, Family Memories/Memorias de familia.

### WRITING LESSON

The learners will write for the purpose of evaluating the project. Writing for critical analysis and will be emphasized.

### MATERIALS

Bread, Bread, Bread by Ann Morris

Family Memories/Memorias de familia by participating families

Bread from different cultures

Project evaluations (What We Learned)

Journals, crayons, markers, pens and pencils

Completed Reading Logs

Blank Learning Logs and Research forms

## SESSION SIX STRATEGY LESSON

AREA OF FOCUS Reading for information

CONCEPT The learners will understand (1) that non-fiction texts are used to provide factual knowledge and (2) that research and writing about new concepts can clarify and expand previous knowledge and experience.

EVALUATION (Why do the learners need this lesson?)

The learners need to expand their experiences with non-fiction texts and research techniques.

INITIATING (How will the teacher set up the lesson and activate the readers' backgrounds?)

The learners will eat and discuss the different kinds of bread from different cultures. The learners will record their observations in the Learning Logs.

INTERACTING (What will the learners do to interact with the text and use language?)

The learners will read Bread, Bread, Bread. They will discuss how one common food is different in many cultures. They will write new information in the Learning Logs.

EXTENDING (What will the teacher do to extend the lesson beyond the text?)

The learners may conduct independent research during the next week on other topics of interest to them. Resources for research will be identified for future reference. The learners will be given a Research form for future use.

## EVALUATION

Participants reflected on their current literacy development, how they would like to experience growth, and what they learned about their personal and community literacy by the end of the project. Group charts were developed that included these personal observations, including those of the teacher. Assessment was conducted individually and collectively with the K-W-L (Ogle, 1986) strategy. Additionally, an evaluation of each activity was available for each family to complete at the end of the project (See Appendix A).

The teacher completed an evaluation of the project with respect to the five goals listed above. The second, third and fifth goals involve the teacher's personal growth; observations about progress toward these goals were recorded in a reflections journal (see Appendix B). The teacher evaluated the first, second, fourth and fifth goals by observation of journal writing (See Appendix C), group discussions, book sharing (See Appendix D) and home-school participation. These observations were also recorded in the reflections journal. A quantitative record of home-school participation indicators such as homework completion, parent conference attendance, parent education participation, volunteerism and PTA participation also may be completed.

The teacher and the students collaborated in an ongoing assessment of the project including discussions of

themes, activities and literature selections. This ongoing assessment facilitated the co-construction of a curriculum that reflected the needs, background and experience of all participants. For example, the participants began reading aloud the chapter book, El Río de los Castores by Fernando Martínez Gil. While the book was very enjoyable, it was decided that due to time constraints, it would be more effective to read Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia. It was agreed that this selection would serve as a model for the publication of Family Memories/Memorias de familia and be a pleasant read-aloud experience.

While these evaluation activities were appropriate for this project, each Family Reading Circles/Círculos literarios de familia project may be different depending on the interests, backgrounds and experiences of the participants. Evaluation activities should be modified or invented to suit the learners.

### Book Box Materials

We found these books and magazines to be good reading and suited to our interests. Each family who participates in such a project will, of course, have different interests and may want to select other materials for reading.

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- de Paola, T. (1986). Un pasito. . . y otro pasito [Now one foot, now the other]. Caracas, Venezuela: Ediciones Ekaré-Banco del Libro.
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- Dorros, A. (1991). Tonight is Carnaval. New York: Dutton Children's Books.
- Dorros, A. (1991). Por fin es Carnaval [Tonight is Carnaval]. New York: Dutton Children's Books.
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Garza, C. L. (1990). Family pictures - cuadros de familia. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

GeoMundo [GeoWorld Magazine]. Des Moines, Iowa: Editorial America. S.A., P.O. Box 10950, Des Moines, Iowa 50347

Gil, F. M. (1980). El río de los castores [River of the Beavers]. Barcelona: Editorial Noguer.

Hayes, J. (1987). La llorona - The weeping woman. El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press.

Heller, R. (1983). The reason for a flower. New York: Scholastic.

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Scholes, K. (1992). Tiempos de paz [Peacetimes]. Colonia de Valle, Mexico: Editorial Origen.

Ser padres [Parents Magazine]. New York: Gruner + Jahr U.S.A. Publishing, 685 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Tanner, J. (1987). Niki's Walk. Cleveland: Modern Curriculum Press.

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#### AUTHOR'S NOTES

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the community of learners who have guided and supported this project. This collaborative project was possible because of the dedicated efforts of the Lalo Diaz family\* whose names and ages are listed below. My profound gratitude cannot be expressed in words. Thank you to:

Father

Lalo Diaz, age 66

Mother

Hermelinda Diaz, age 34

Brothers

Lupe, age 16

Juan, age 4

Sisters

Alicia, age 17

Maria, age 14

Aurora, age 13

Luisa, age 11

Blanca, age 6

I have been sustained in this effort by a constellation of wise and patient friends, family members and professors during this project who have contributed advice, knowledge and encouragement. Thank you to my family, the faculty of the Reading Education Program at California State University, San Bernardino, and my professional colleagues.

\* The names of the family members have been changed to protect their right to privacy.

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## APPENDIX A

### Project Evaluation: What We Learned/Lo que aprendimos Sample

Name/nombre Hermelinda Date/fecha 4-12-93

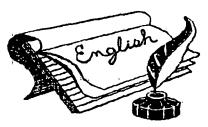
#### What We Learned



Book box/Caja de libros El acceso es más fácil para aumentar los libros en la casa.



Sharing/Compartimiento Me gusta oír las opiniones de todos.



Journals/Diarios Mejora la escritura diariamente, me ayuda escribir mis pensamientos.



Read-Aloud/Lectura en voz alta Es muy agradable y me ayuda comprender más el cuento.



Dialogue/diálogo Aprendemos muchas cosas de la lectura y como ayudarles a los niños.

#### *Lo que aprendimos*

## APPENDIX B

### Reflections Journal by Jolinda Curtin

February 18, 1993

Last night was our first session of family literacy. We all filled out a paper about ourselves and drew our own pictures. Then we read our autobiography to our partners who then introduced us to the group. We laughed about our self-portraits, but it was interesting to find out things that we didn't know about one another.

I hope by naming and locating ourselves in our world, we will begin the process of conscientization, Paul Freire's word for the process of naming and transforming the world. Any attempt to foster or expand literacy must include dialogue, an attempt to build meaning by sharing our experience of the world.

It took longer to complete the knowledge charts than I had anticipated. I think that it would not be necessary to solicit a contribution from every member on each chart. We agreed that it got a little tiresome for the younger members of the family. The discussion of how to illustrate the contributions was very good. It's easy to forget that pictures are worth a thousand words!

It was amazing to see the flexibility (both linguistic and cognitive) that everyone in the family enjoys with the two languages, English and Spanish. They can easily

translate as they read English, so that the Spanish monolinguals can understand. And the same is equally true for Spanish to English.

We are not taking advantage of this strength in our schools! We need to raise the status of Spanish speaking bilinguals and promote bilingualism.

February 24, 1993

This is our second session and everyone seemed to be looking forward to it. We began with interactive journal writing. Blanca (age 6) cried and said she did not know how to write. I reassured that she could write "her way" and then read it to me. She was afraid that her older sisters would make fun of her writing. I explained that everyone begins by playing with writing and pretty soon they can write the "grown-up" way. Juan (age 4) colored and wrote happily while singing "Humpty Dumpty" to himself. He had learned the English version at Headstart and he was delighted when I responded with the Spanish version!

Book Sharing was very gratifying. Everyone enjoyed having the books in the home and had spent time comparing their impressions of various books. I feel that we are making progress toward critical literacy because we had an extensive and thoughtful discussion of the books we had read.

March 3, 1993

I'm glad that I included some wordless books in the

Book Box to entice reluctant readers. Sr. Díaz (age 66) completed only a few years of school in Mexico and is less comfortable with print than his wife. He prefers our Read-Aloud time and participates more on an oral basis. I feel that these activities will empower him to participate more in the education of his children, because he possesses a vast amount of knowledge and experience, but the school activities (English only) were often not connected to the culture and background of the family. When Aurora (age 13) was in my kindergarten class, I certainly was not aware of his intelligence and knowledge.

There was a serious discussion of Now One Foot, Now the Other/Un pasito . . . y otro pasito by Tomie de Paola. We talked about how elderly people are cared for in the family home in Mexico and how they are often placed in nursing homes here in America. We are beginning to use our literacy to examine our world and compare how different cultures solve the same problems.

March 10, 1993

We enjoyed reading a story from Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia by Carmen Lomas Garza. We read the story about picking nopal catus and we discussed how each of us prepares nopalitos without getting the stickers in our fingers. We began writing rough drafts of our stories to publish in our own book which we decided to call Family Memories/Memorias de familia.

Sra. Diaz (age 34) showed me a box with all the awards and commendations that the children have received in school. It would be so helpful if teachers could visit the homes of all their students and see how interested and supportive the families are. I'll bet that most of the children's teachers have no idea how those awards are treasured. I have heard teachers voice concerns about not being able to send awards that the parents can read. Wouldn't that box of treasured certificates reassure them?

March 17, 1993

We really have a rhythm now. Everyone just sits down and after greeting one another, we comment on the previous session. After this brief discussion, we write in our journals. It seems to me that everyone is becoming more comfortable with the writing process. I see more authenticity each week in the journal entries.

Maria (age 14) told me she really enjoys the GeoMundo magazines because she wants to become a travel agent. She has been sharing her new information about the world with her family and they were all enthusiastic about reading the magazines. It seems that reading is contagious!

We enjoyed reading some of the poems in Arroz con leche and recalling others from our childhoods. We decided that it would be nice to include some of these in our book. I think that the continuity of literacy traditions over generations is something very precious. I wish that I could

remember more of the stories and poems that my parents shared with me.

March 24, 1993

Tonight was our last session for awhile because of my sister's wedding on Saturday. I had hoped to have the final drafts of our Family Memories stories published, but I haven't had time. I think we will have our celebration at a later date. I will always cherish these sessions with the Diaz family. While I have seen many indications of growth, such as an increase in their ownership of literacy, I think that I may have profited more than they have. The degree to which this family has extended themselves in order to provide a good education for their children is remarkable. In the absence of primary language support, the three oldest students are close to high school graduation and have plans to continue on to college.

It makes me renew my efforts to establish primary language support in the form of homework translations, bilingual parent newsletters, and native language texts. I noticed a school newsletter on the table tonight. It was very attractively printed, with interesting articles on school events and parenting advice. It was written in English. I asked Sra. Diaz if there was a translation available upon request and she was not aware of one. Perhaps family literacy projects like this will make everyone aware of the need to increase communication between

the home and school. Our schools need to cultivate the rich resources of the home in order to enrich the learning experiences of our students.

*Como el suelo, por más rico que sea,  
no puede dar fruto si no se cultiva.*

Soil, no matter how rich it may be, cannot give fruit if it is not cultivated.

Seneca

## APPENDIX C

### Interactive Journal Writing Sample

Date/fecha 4/12/93



This is a picture of something important to me.  
Esto es un dibujo de algo que es importante para mí.

My words/mis palabras: yesterday my aunt and  
uncle came to pick us up. we  
were going to the park to ride  
the egg we had lots of  
fun: I smash an egg on my  
uncle it was fun!

Response/respuesta: What was the park's name.  
Was there a lot of people.

Signature/firma

## APPENDIX D

### Reading Log Sample

Name/nombre

Date/fecha 3/12/93

What I Have Read



*Lo que he leído*

Title/título	Author/autor	My impressions/mis impresiones
Ando's U.S.A.	William Steig	Muy entretenido
El pizarrón encantado	Emilia Calabrese	Muy entretenido
Murciélagos y el gato	Marguerite Black	Muy entretenido
El sombrero que no daba un día culposo	Zornilda Vasquez	Aprendí algo nuevo.
Vaney wilcox Richards		Esto muy gracioso
La mariposa malhumorada	Eduardo	Es un poco aburrido
El sueñodil zorro	Tejima	Muy entretenido
El papa de David	Robert N. Munsch	esta muy paisajes.
Américas	"	D. buenos consejos
Arco con leche	Celia delacré	
Libro de ecología	Editorial Nortena	Aprende muchas cosas
	algela williams	

## APPENDIX E

### Family Memories/Memorias de familia Sample



One time when I was about six or seven years old, my dad took me with him on a donkey to deliver some animal food to people. While my dad stopped to say "hi" to his friends, the donkey got scared and started to jump and run. There were many rocks there so I fell off the donkey and hurt my ear. My aunt saw me fall and took me in her house to clean up my ear.

*Una vez cuando tenía seis o siete años, fui con mi papá a dejar comida de animales a unas personas. Cuando mi papá estaba saludando a sus amigos el burro se espantó y empezó a brincar y a correr. Había muchas piedras y me caí del burro. Me lastimé el oído. Mi tía me vio que me caí y me llevó a su casa a curarme mi oído.*

*María Díaz*

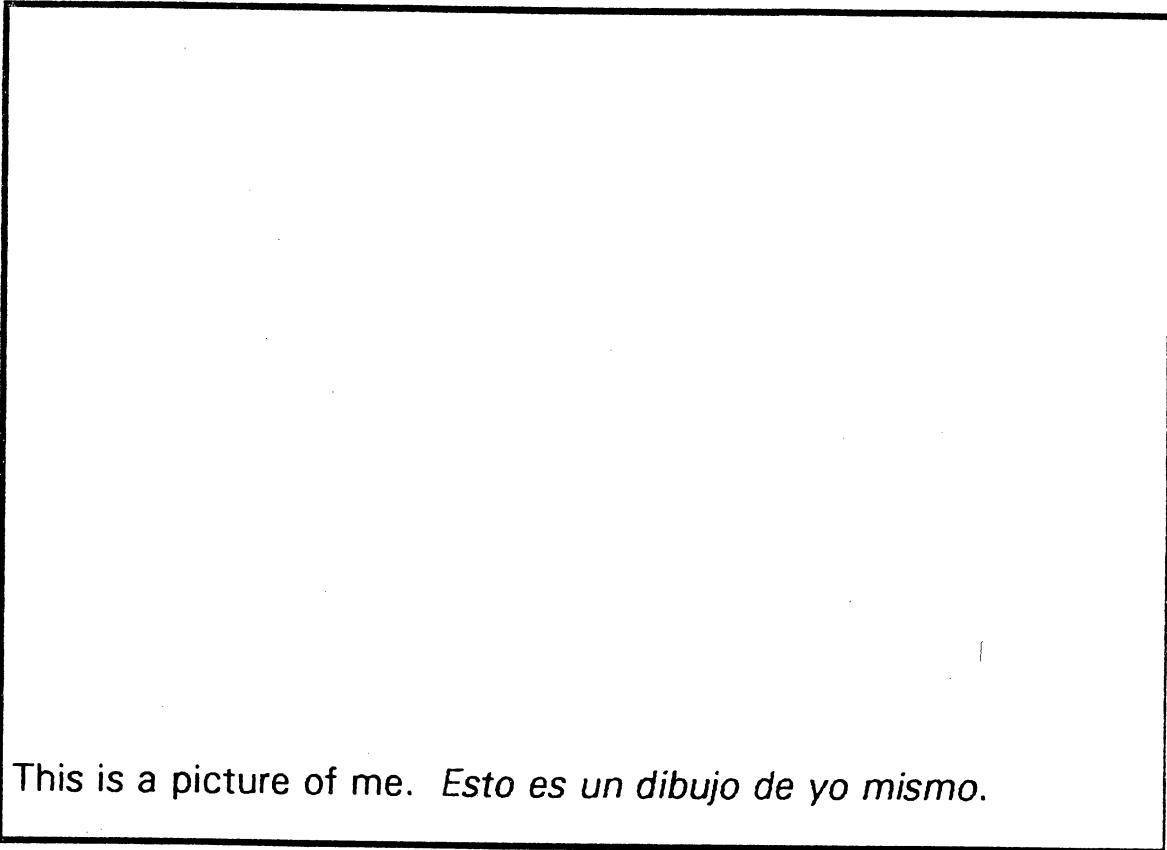
*Abril, 1993*

## APPENDIX F

### Forms for Family Reading Circles

Name/nombre \_\_\_\_\_

## Who am I? ¿Quién soy yo?



This is a picture of me. *Esto es un dibujo de yo mismo.*

I am a \_\_\_\_\_. I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

*Soy un(a) \_\_\_\_\_.* *Tengo \_\_\_\_\_ años.*

My home \_\_\_\_\_.

*My hogar* \_\_\_\_\_.

I work \_\_\_\_\_.

*Trabajo* \_\_\_\_\_.

My family  
*Mi familia*

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I like to

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*Me gusta*

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*I would like to*

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*Me gustaría*

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# KNOWLEDGE CHART

## *CARTA DE CONOCIMIENTO*

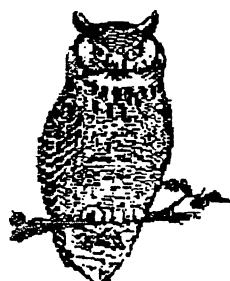
What We Know  
*Lo que sabemos*

What We Want to Learn  
*Lo que queremos aprender*

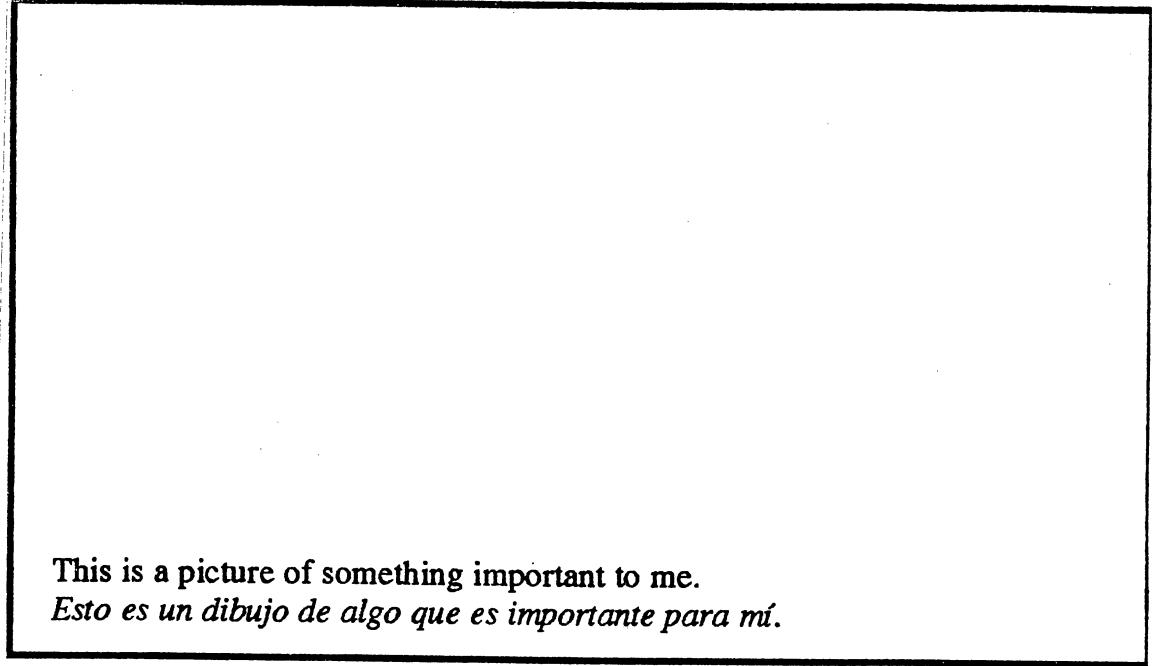
How We will Learn  
*Como lo aprenderemos*

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Ogle, D. (1986) The K-W-L: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text. The Reading Teacher, 39, 564-570.



Date/fecha \_\_\_\_\_



This is a picture of something important to me.  
*Esto es un dibujo de algo que es importante para mí.*

My words/*mis palabras*: \_\_\_\_\_

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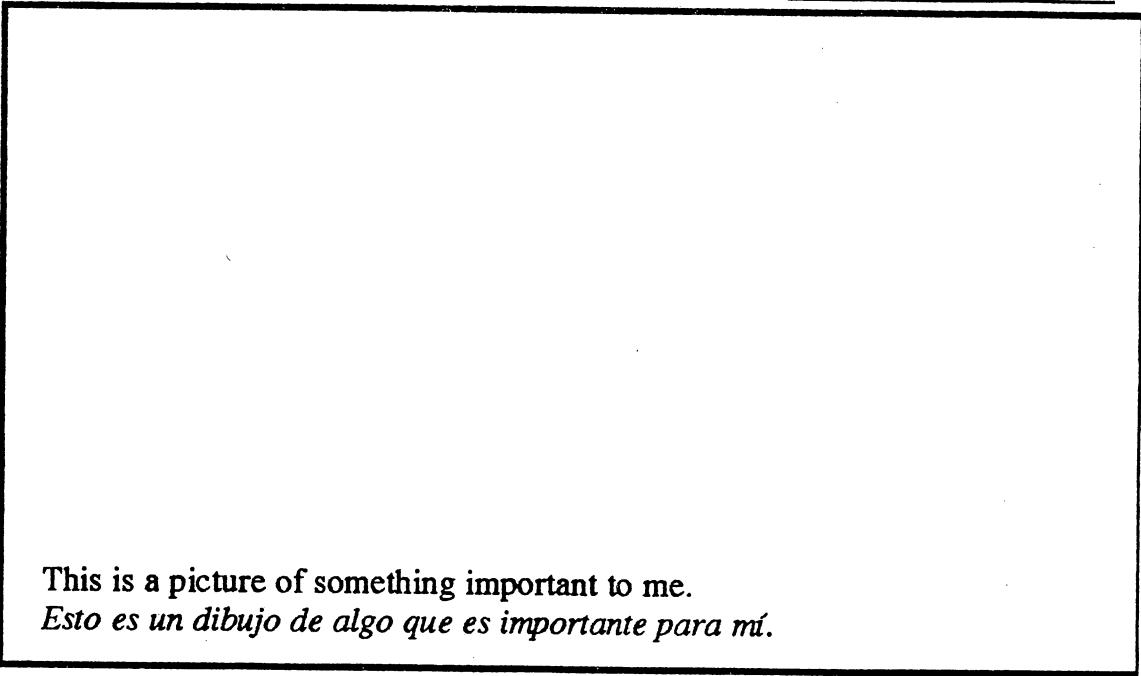
Response/*respuesta*: \_\_\_\_\_

---

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Signature/*firma* \_\_\_\_\_

Date/*fecha* \_\_\_\_\_



This is a picture of something important to me.  
*Esto es un dibujo de algo que es importante para mí.*

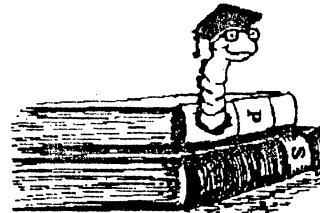
My words/*mis palabras*:

Response/*respuesta*:

Signature/*firma* \_\_\_\_\_

Name/nombre \_\_\_\_\_ Date/fecha \_\_\_\_\_

## What I Have Read



*Lo que he leído*

Title/título

Author/autor

My impressions/mis impresiones

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Name/nombre \_\_\_\_\_ Date/fecha \_\_\_\_\_

What I Have Written



*Lo que he escrito*

What/qué

Why/por qué

When/cuándo

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Name/nombre \_\_\_\_\_ Date/fecha \_\_\_\_\_

## PREDICTION CHART



What I Think Will Happen  
*Lo que pienso va a pasar*

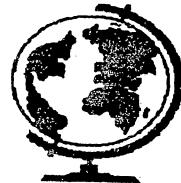
## CARTA DE PREDICCION



What Really Happened  
*Lo que pasó de verdad*

Name/nombre \_\_\_\_\_ Date/fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Learning Log



*Diario de aprendizaje*

I learned...

*Aprendí que...*

References/referencias:



# Research Report

## *Reporte de recursos*

Name/nombre

Date/fecha

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I learned...

*Aprendí que...*

References/referencias:

Name/nombre \_\_\_\_\_ Date/fecha \_\_\_\_\_

## What We Learned

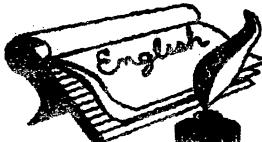
## *Lo que aprendimos*



Book box/Caja de libros \_\_\_\_\_



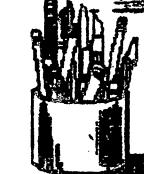
Sharing/Compartimiento \_\_\_\_\_



Journals/Diarios \_\_\_\_\_



Read-Aloud/Lectura en voz alta \_\_\_\_\_



Publishing House/Editorial \_\_\_\_\_



Dialogue/dialogo \_\_\_\_\_