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Teaching literacy to first grade bilingual students

Ana María Pérez

TEACHING LITERACY TO FIRST GRADE

BILINGUAL STUDENTS

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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:

Bilingual/Cross-Cultural Education

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by

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ABSTRACT

A child's first experience with literacy usually begins in the home. A family member reads a book to the child while that child gleefully smiles at its meaning. Perhaps a child's first literacy experience comes long before this, for example, in the womb. More important than when the child has its first wonderful experience with literacy, is how we as family members and as educators alike, can achieve to keep the child's literacy attainment strong and on going for the rest of their lives.

Most all researchers will agree that in order for a child to attain literacy, he or she must be well instructed in a class curriculum that achieves to create a well-balanced literacy program for every type of learner. This well-balanced literacy program involves using Phonics instruction along with Whole Language instruction which includes using the Language Experience Approach (LEA) which focuses on using the child's primary language as a vital means of attaining literacy achievement. One cannot expect a child to achieve reading comprehension with just Phonics instruction and one cannot expect a child to achieve literacy success in a language he or she does not understand. It is not fair to the child.

This investigation examined the effects of using a mediated reading strategy called "Mini Shared Reading" as part of a well balanced literacy program with five male bilingual students identified as struggling readers. These five students were all instructed in their primary language, which in this case was Spanish. This investigation was made to enhance the awareness that reading strategies such as Mini Shared Reading and using the child's native tongue are valuable assets in obtaining literacy achievement from all students especially those who are struggling to read or are struggling to begin to read.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

To my loving husband Tino and to my wonderful children: Tiffany, Jeanette, Joshua and Victoria. Your faith and belief in me made this project possible. Thank you for your patience, love, and support. Because of you my dream has come true. You have showed me what a true Mexican *familia* is. I love you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

Introduction

For years, Bilingual Education has become one of the most controversial issues within the educational realm. Many pro-Bilingual Education advocates will argue that teaching language minority children the class curriculum in their primary language can and will create a strong, firm bridge to teaching the same curriculum skills in English, the majority language.

To date, the debate as to whether or not bilingual education should be implemented in our schools is still raging on with both sides. Advocates for or against Bilingual Education continue to do numerous and extensive research on it especially on the benefits of teaching our language minority children to read in their primary language first and then in the majority language. According to the National Research Center (NRC), "if language-minority children arrive at school with no proficiency in English but speaking a language for which there are instructional guides, learning materials, and locally available proficient teachers, these children should be taught how to read in their native language

while acquiring oral proficiency in English and subsequently taught to extend their skills to reading in English (Antunez, 2000).

Since the passing of proposition 227, several school districts have opted to either minimize or eliminate using a non-English speaking child's primary language as a successful tool for teaching. This decision has greatly affected how educators teach children to read. Moreover, it has greatly affected the overall literacy attainment of children whose primary language is not English.

According to Krashen (1996), the use of the students' native tongue provides them with knowledge and literacy (Ramos, 2001). This is because the best way to teach a child to reach high levels of literacy competence, is by creating and implementing a complete and balanced literacy program that will create high level readers in their native tongue, and thereafter achieve high level readers in the English language. Children learn best when they are given a context in which to learn, and the knowledge that children acquire in "their first language can make second-language input much more comprehensible" (Krashen, 1992, p. 37; NAECY, 1995).

It is imperative that educators and administrators on the state level realize the importance of teaching English

Language Learners (ELL's), the class curriculum and literacy attainment in their native tongue. If non-native-speaking students are immersed in English, they will not have access to the content area knowledge and academic skills that their English-speaking peers are learning. Consequently, they are likely to get further and further behind in their academic development while they are concentrating on learning English" (Lucas & Katz, 1994).

With proper educational guidance, these children can eventually be taught the class curriculum and literacy in English. According to some researchers this occurs when children have acquired BICS and CALP in L1, these skills are transferable to L2, facilitating their reading comprehension of any text (Maldonado, 1994). In order to facilitate the transfer of skills from the primary language to the majority language, educators must be careful in choosing what English Language Development (ELD) skills will be implemented in order for the transition to be a complete success. Effective teachers make use of every available resource-including knowledge of a LEP student's native language-to ensure that students learn. It is unlikely that an effective teacher would allow a student to reach unreasonably high levels of

frustration if using that student's L1 could alleviate a particular problem and allow the student to get on with class task completion (Barrera & Jimenez, 2000). Most educators will agree that literacy is the most important aspect of a child's education. Without literacy, a child's opportunity to learn what is being taught in the classroom will be limited if not non-existent because all the areas of the classroom curriculum require reading, including math.

Background to the Study

There are 1.4 million California schoolchildren who speak another language other than English (Goldenberg, 2001). Limited English Proficient students are not only one of the largest, but also one of the most rapidly growing sectors of our total student population. Yet, Limited English Proficient (LEP) students especially those with Spanish as their primary language, are twice as likely to be below the reading level of their White or Asian American peers (Hispanic Dropout Project, 1996; NCES, 1997; NAEP, 2000, Ramirez, n.d.).

Researchers noted that educators care a great deal about literacy development, yet, while both time and money have been devoted to improving literacy skills,

nevertheless "reading problems have neither diminished nor have they gone away" (Jewell & Zintz, 1986, p. 82; Ziminsky, 1994). It is not surprising then that reading problems are especially high amongst our English Language Learners who speak another language other than English. Research has documented that minority language students generally perform poorly in the area of reading achievement when compared to their Anglo peers (Baca & Cervantes, 1986; Ziminsky, 1994). If all instruction is provided in English, students who are not fluent in English cannot hope to successfully compete with those who are (Lucas & Katz, 1994). This is why Bilingual Education should always be a part of our educational system. Bilingual Education enhances the awareness that non-English speaking students learn the curriculum especially literacy in their native language.

Language acquisition comes naturally to all humans at a very young age through their surroundings. They process this language cognitively and eventually learn to find meaning in it since language, thought and speech are all integral components of developmental learning. Language also helps the child's cognitive development in school. Thonis (1983, p. 130) states: "Once a child has learned to read, or more generally, has acquired cognitive skills in

a language, transference of those skills to the other language occurs easily and efficiently." This statement indicates that native language cognitive development may produce a more powerful level of English literacy as students transfer prior learned Spanish cognitive reading strategies to English reading situations (Swicegood, 1994). For young children, the language of the home is the language they have used since birth, the language they use to make and establish meaningful communicative relationships, and the language they use to begin to construct their knowledge and test their learning (NAEYC, 1995). It is only natural then that the language that child has heard, spoken, and understood as a child, become the language that child should learn in. Any other way just doesn't make sense.

The use of a child's primary language for literacy attainment can help that same child acquire literacy in the mainstream language. This is possible because the literacy skills learned in the child's native language will be appropriated to the mainstream language. The importance of developmental reading in a child's native language is described in terms of what several researchers and educators have studied and concluded about this issue. The acquisition and developmental reading of a bilingual

child's attainment of literacy in the mainstream language is explained in terms of what researchers and educators claim are important factors that contribute to biliterate students. This is what Bilingual Education strives for. It wants all non-English-speaking students to become biliterate in society. [A]n obvious advantage of learning to read in one's native language and subsequently learning to read a second language is the potential to become biliterate-a skilled reader and writer of two languages (Escamilla, 2000). The attainment of biliteracy will require that Spanish literacy programs be grounded in a knowledge base of how the Spanish language works. Teaching children to read in Spanish is NOT the same as teaching children to read in English (Escamilla, 2000).

If we, in fact, learn to read by reading, it will be much easier to learn to read in a language one already knows, since written material in that language will be more comprehensible. Once you can read, you can read. This ability transfers to other languages that may be acquired (Krashen, 1991). Reading something that makes sense is much easier than reading something that does not (Hamayan & Pfleger, 1987). From a theoretical perspective, learning to read in one's home language will be easier than learning to read a second language, particularly an

unfamiliar one. The learner brings to the task of learning to read his or her native language a syntactic and semantic knowledge of the language which makes it possible to predict the meaning of the written form (NCELA). Children learn best when they are given a context in which to learn, and the knowledge that children acquire in "their first language can make second-language input much more comprehensible" (Krashen 1992, p. 37; NAECY, 1995).

Cummins (1990), ...maintains that an instructional focus on the development of dominant language literacy will have a positive impact on second language literacy. Furthermore, Cummins (1987), maintains that once a student is literate in the primary language, and verbally proficient in a second language, cognitive and academic literacy skills transfer to the student's second language (Swicegood, 1994). There is considerable evidence that learning through the native language has many advantages for language minority students. It facilitates the development of both basic and advanced literacy in Spanish and English; it allows Spanish dominant students to gain important content knowledge that will make the English they encounter more comprehensible; and it enhances overall cognitive and social development (Smith & Davis, 1998).

When a non-English speaking student learns in his/her native tongue, that child will academically catch up in the class curriculum with the English-speaking child. If the English language learner is forced to learn the class curriculum in the majority language instead of his/her native language, that child's chances of achieving complete academic competence will be destroyed and that child's chance of graduating from high school will be diminished.

Reading extensively in research journals that focus on teaching language minority children to read in their primary language, I have discovered a common theme that most researchers agree on. Some researches claim that the development of English language learner's Spanish reading ability in a bilingual context is crucial to help them read in the majority language, which is English. Bilingual children must first develop reading skills in L1 and oral language proficiency in L2. Reading skills in L2 come later in the transition process from reading L1 to reading in L2, or when this process has properly taken place, the children can then transfer or apply reading skills in L1 to L2 effectively (Carrasquillo & Phillip, 1984; Sanchez, 1972; Maldonado, 1994).

Adequate progress in learning to read in English (or any alphabetic language) beyond the initial level depends on: having a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically, sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts, sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to render written texts meaningful and interesting, control over procedures for monitoring comprehension and repairing misunderstandings, and continued interest and motivation to read for a variety of purposes (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Native language literacy also makes a difference in the way L2 literacy develops. Students already literate in their first language are able to transfer many of the skills they have attained through native language reading to the second language (Hamayan & Pfleger, 1987). Contrary to current debates on language policy, bilingualism does not interfere with the development of English literacy (Ramirez, n.d.).

When a child has reached a high level of reading fluency in the native tongue which includes good literacy strategies such as a balanced literacy program that includes vocabulary development, that child can then achieve a high level of reading fluency in the English

language. "Once children have acquired the reading mechanism they are then able to develop reading comprehension. The reading mechanisms and comprehension skills are transferable to L2 when the child is ready for transition [i.e., after mastering skills in L1 or when L1 and L2 have been developed simultaneously] (Hakuta, 1986; Ovando & Collier, 1985; Douglas, 1981; Maldonado, 1994). On the other hand, reading literacy skills in L1 and L2 can be developed simultaneously within an integrated dual language instruction program or integrated Bilingual Education program (Maldonado, 1994). This is possible because a child can read a particular story in his/her nattongue and thereafter read the same story in English without any difficulties. This simultaneous process simplifies and facilitates reading the text in English because that child has acquired some background knowledge of it due to reading the same text in the native tongue.

Furthermore, evidence supports the benefits of the use of the native language in language and reading instruction. English language skills can be developed at a higher thinking level, and language and reading skills can be acquired at a higher cognitive-literacy level through the use of the native language as the medium of instruction (Maldonado, 1994).

As auditory and oral language development are prerequisites for learning to read in English, Phonemic Awareness should be taught in the pre-reading stage of literacy development (Adams, 1990; Atunez 2000). In contrast, as phonemic and phonological awareness are integral components of the reading process, they are best taught in Spanish in the context of reading and writing (Escamilla, 2000; Antunez, 2000). If one learns to read in one language, there appears to be much transfer of ability to learn in a second language that is known to the student which has the same grapheme-phoneme pattern (Schon, Hopkins, & Davis, 1982). Phonics instruction is an integral part of the literacy instruction. In Spanish literacy, many researchers claim that "Phonics' should be taught first based on the fact that Spanish is a highly syllabic language.

While Phonic instruction is an integral part of the reading process, it must be taught jointly within the context of literacy. Therefore, literacy in any language and dual literacy, in general, can best be achieved by using the Whole Language Approach and implementing Language Experience Approach strategies that will create dual language literacy success. One of the best ways to help students learning ESL make the transition from their

12

oral language to standard printed English is the Language
Experience approach (LEA). The LEA approach is based on
the notion that children are better able to read materials
that stem from their own experience and are based on their
own oral language. In fact, LEA is often used as a tool
for developing oral language skills in L2 (Hamayan &
Pfleger, 1981).

Learning to read English after having succeeded in
reading in Spanish is accomplished in less than half the
time confirming a major transfer factor in reading skills
between the two languages. Teaching language minority
children to read in their primary language first, not only
increases self esteem of ethnicity, race and language but
it also helps the children develop enough literacy skills
in their native tongue that will eventually transfer over
to the second language.

There is a strong correlation between self-esteem and
the ability to retain and improve literacy skills in
reading, and that a bilingual setting is beneficial to
language minority children who need to feel good about
their educational abilities (Parsons, 1983). ...Educators
must accept the legitimacy of children's home language,
respect (hold in high regard) and value (esteem,
appreciate) the home culture... (NAEYC, 1995). English

learners greater access to content knowledge and to their own prior knowledge and experiences, offer opportunities for social and academic interaction, and support the development of their English language skills as well as their self-esteem. ...When students see that their languages are valued, their self-esteem and identity are strengthened (Lucas & Katz, 1994). Using and valuing student's native languages in schools and classrooms supports and enhances the student's learning because they themselves are indirectly valued (Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Lucas & Katz, 1994). Whatever language children speak, they should be able to demonstrate their capabilities and also feel the success of being appreciated and valued (NAEYC, 1995). In other words, these researchers agree that in order for a child to successfully read in their secondary language, they must be taught to read in their primary language first. Teachers can achieve this by building up self-esteem using the non-English speaking child's native language to teach the curriculum and to obtain literacy, and by recognizing the important role it can play in second-language literacy development, and above all, placing value on being bilingual, bicultural, and bi-literate (Barrera & Jimenez, 2000).

The basic decisions about languages will set the parameters for decisions about reading. If no concern is given to languages other than English, the only reading instruction will be in English and there will be no concern for how learning to read in English is influenced by the mother tongue of bilingual students (Goodman & Goodman, 1978). A good bilingual program along with its teacher will always take into consideration the child's native language as an important source for literacy attainment in both the primary language and in the mainstream language. Literacy skills in Spanish can be enhanced by instruction that engages students, limits interruptions, increases the quantity and quality of decoding instruction, and uses smaller numbers of students in instructional groups (Guerrero & Sloan, 2001). These researchers also agree that program design, teacher qualifications and commitment, available instructional materials, and the validity of the tests used to measure reading, can influence how well our Spanish-speaking students learn to read in both Spanish and English. In other words, reading proficiency developed in one-language transfers to the ability to read in the second language. This is a claim that is supported by the two top bilingual researchers of our time: Cummings and Krashen.

...[T]here are others who think that teaching children to read in Spanish is a "waste of time" and that this practice interferes with learning to read in English (Rossell & Baker, 1996b; Porter, 1996; Esamilla 2000). This is not true. There are many non-English speaking students who have achieved high levels of Spanish reading fluency with complete comprehension who are now reading fluently in English with complete comprehension. This literacy achievement in two languages could not have occurred if our English language learners were not taught in their native tongue first. It must be stated that reading fluency without complete comprehension is not valid as complete reading fluency. Research reveals that comprehension is not only critical to good literacy skills, but also to all academic learning. Comprehension is not a passive process, but rather one requiring readers to think about what they are reading. Directly teaching and developing vocabulary development is critical to the development of strong comprehension skills (Antunez, 2000).

The National Review Council's (NRC) report explains that hurrying young non-English-speaking children into reading English without ensuring adequate preparation is counterproductive (Antunez, 2002). One of the major

16

findings regarding helping bilingual students become
literate is that teachers need to understand how becoming
literate in L1 differs from becoming literate in English;
how the languages interact during development over time;
and their implications for teaching, learning, and
assessment (Ramirez, n.d). In order for teachers to begin
the transition from native reading to English reading, the
teachers must assess the child first to survey if the
child has achieved a high level of native language
reading, is using all the cueing systems during reading
for fluency, and his or her comprehension skills are
adequate for English reading. A reading assessment of the
child is crucial because L1 reading skills are transferred
to L2 when children are ready on the basis of their
individual learning styles and human diversity"
(Maldonado, 1994).

There is so much injustice done against Bilingual
Education especially regarding the teaching of a child to
read in his/her primary language rather than in the
majority language. Several researchers against Bilingual
Education have concluded that transition Bilingual
Education has been ineffective. This is based primarily on
their findings that children in Bilingual Education
programs do no better (and no worse) in English language

17

skills than children in traditional programs who are exposed to English throughout the entire day. The attempt to compare the effectiveness of bilingual programs with non-bilingual programs is futile since there are no truly adequate comparison groups.

Bilingual advocates and researchers claim that there is no reason to assume that Bilingual Education itself has failed or has no promise. Inadequacies in evaluation of effectiveness do not necessarily reflect inadequacies in programs. Pro bilingual researchers agree that the research done against Bilingual Education and bilingual literacy overshadows the strong evidence of research done on the benefits of primary language literacy. They agree that the attempt of other researchers to prove that Bilingual Education is ineffective and theoretically incorrect is unjust due to the inappropriate tests done to prove it. An example of inappropriate testing is when researchers compare the "effectiveness" of bilingual programs with non-bilingual programs. Many bilingual advocates agree that this type of testing is unfounded since the two groups studied to prove this are inappropriately measured. There is a fear that many more inappropriate and ineffective studies done against Bilingual Education and primary literacy teaching will

damage the already strong theoretical evidence and justification of the value of developmental reading in a child's primary language.

Despite the wonderful and effective research that has been done, some researchers will agree that much more needed research needs to be done on the benefits of Bilingual Education and primary language literacy teaching. For now however, the bit of research that has been done on this controversial issue is strong and as educator's we must keep an open heart and mind as to what will work best to ensure and strengthen our children's educational needs.

With this in mind, these pro-bilingual researchers strongly agree and conclude that more research and more effective case studies must be done to prove the benefits of teaching our language minority children to read in their primary language first and thereafter in the English language. When program settings acknowledge and support the children's home language and culture, the ties between the family and school are strengthened. In a supportive atmosphere young children's home language is less likely to atrophy (Chang, 1993), a situation that could threaten the children's important ties to family and community (NAEYC, 1995). We, as educators owe it to our language

minority children who deserve to learn in a warm
educational environment and who deserve to learn in a
language they can understand.

Statement of the Problem

For many years the debate of how literacy should be
taught to school children still continues. Some
researchers and educators believe that the Phonics
Approach is the best and only way to teach a child to
read. Others believe that Whole Language is the best and
only way to teach a child to read. These are two halves of
what should be a complete whole literacy program.
Therefore, the best and most effective way to teach a
child to read, is implementing a well-balanced literacy
program that includes both the teaching of the use of
graphophonics and the importance of reading for meaning. A
child cannot find meaning in text if only Phonics is
introduced and a child cannot begin to read with meaning
if the graphophonic cueing system is not made visible.

Along with implementing a well-balanced literacy
program, proper reading strategies to enhance literacy
attainment should be introduced to children. Read Alouds,
Shared Reading and Guided Reading may not always work for
some students and it may not always be enough especially

for the struggling reader. "Mini Shared" facilitates the reading process by eliminating the fear of reading that some children develop when first introduced to literacy. It allows the struggling reader to gain self-esteem to continue reading and it increases the struggling child's reading level, comprehension, and fluency.

This study will focus on the importance of: 1) implementing a balanced literacy program; 2) supporting the use of a child's native tongue for literacy acquisition; 3) using Mini Shared Reading as a mediated reading strategy; 4) will examine and analyze a recorded transcript of the use of Mini Shared Reading with five struggling readers; 5) compare and analyze the results of this study and 6) conclude that Mini Shared Reading should be used as a daily part of a well balanced literacy program for beginning readers.

Definitions of Terms

Bilingual Education - A classroom setting in which the teacher instructs the students in their native language while at the same time developing their English skills.

English Language Learner (ELL) - A student who is learning English as a second language.

Shared Reading - Is an approach where the teacher
    replicates the bedtime story situation with the
    class, a group of children, or and an individual
    child to enable them to enjoy and participate in the
    reading of books which they cannot yet read for
    themselves.

Guided Reading - It is a technique with specific
    diagnostic, instructional and evaluative intent. It
    supports and encourages the development of strategies
    for independence in reading within a small cluster or
    group.

Phonics Instruction - Is a way of teaching reading that
    stresses learning how letters correspond to sounds
    and how to use this knowledge in reading and
    spelling.

Whole Language Instruction - Is a program in which
    reading, writing, listening and talking are
    integrated in a stimulating natural language-learning
    environment.

Mini Shared Reading - A teaching approach used to
    facilitate and make visible the reading process to a
    small group of children. It is used primarily with
    emergent readers.

<u>Running Records</u> - A reading assessment used by some

    teachers to measure a child's level of reading

    proficiency or lack of.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Big Book Shared Reading

Most children across the nation have at one time or
another experienced being read to by a parent, sibling, or
caregiver. Intuitively, many parents have stimulated a
delight in reading by sharing this experience, helping the
child to identify with the characters in stories and with
their actions, talking about the pictures, and
encouraging, predicting, joining in, singing along or
chanting refrains. Children with such a background of rich
book experience are well on their way to becoming readers,
and will approach school reading with an expectation that
will be absorbing and relevant. They will also have
confidence in their ability to read (Department of
Education Wellington, 1985). This Shared Reading moment of
literacy captures the child's attention to a story that is
of interest. However, it is not only that the story is of
interest to the child, but it is also how the reader reads
the text. When an adult or another student reads the text
of the story with meaning and with emphasis, it captures
the listeners attention and leads the listener to want to
hear more. This attention then leads the child to want to

24

read for him/herself and enjoy it. For a child who loves to read, is a child who will enjoy reading for the rest of his or her life. This shared experience between the reader and the listener is called Shared Reading.

The Shared Book experience in the classroom is conducted between the teacher and a whole group of students or between a fluent reader with a struggling reader. This would most likely be a student who is proficient at reading and another student who is just beginning to understand the relationship between print and meaning.

Shared Reading is an approach where the teacher replicates the bedtime story situation with the class, a group of children, or and an individual child to enable them to enjoy and participate in the reading of books which they cannot yet read for themselves (Mooney, 1990, p. 10). The Shared Book experience involves a teacher and a whole class of children sitting close together while they share in the reading and re-reading of appealing rhymes, songs, poems, and of course, stories. The Shared Book experience is an excellent way of "selling" reading to children. The highly engaging nature of the texts ensure that reading is a pleasurable as well as a meaningful experience (Butler, 1988). Shared Reading with

"Big Books" refers to an approach where bedtime story reading or sharing a story with a child on a parent's lap is simulated in the classroom with a group of children (Hamayan & Pfleger, 1987). It is also an ideal way to introduce children to reading. Shared reading provides the children with the opportunity to learn what a book is, what an "expert" reader does with a book as it is read, what "makes a story", but above all, the children learn that reading is a pleasurable and meaningful experience (Butler, 1988). Teachers use Shared Reading to read aloud books and other texts that children can't read independently (Holdaway, 1979, Tompkins, 2001, p. 49). It is a rewarding situation in which a learner-or a group of learners-sees the text, observes an expert (usually the teacher) reading it with fluency and expression, and is invited to read along.

Shared Reading is another important component of a Whole Language curriculum. It is not enough to only conduct Guided Reading, independent reading or group reading to achieve complete literate students. Teachers must do Shared Reading in the classroom in order for the children to observe how reading is done effectively. To do this effectively, the teacher chooses "Big Books" or enlarged books to openly show the reading strategies or

cues to the students that must be learned in order to become successful literate students. Shared Reading involves the use of enlarged books usually chosen from among the children's favorite books. The enlarged books allow the teacher to create an intimate atmosphere with a number of children at once. The large books sets a stage for involvement with both the story and the print since the children are all able to see what's on the page as they listen to and watch the teacher read as they read along (Newman, 1985, p. 62). Enlarged books are called Big Books. In the hands of a faring adult, Big Books can be used to introduce children to reading in a most enjoyable and non-threatening way (Butler, 1988). The teacher takes advantage of the child's attention to the enlarged text and illustrations to teach the children reading strategies they need in order to become fluent readers themselves. This is because the children become readers long before reading begins in their lives. Big book Shared Reading is effective especially if the Big Books are patterned to repeat texts, poems or chants.

Big Books are large not only in illustrations, but also in print. This gives children the intimacy and the concept that they are actually reading. Big Books are a great way to share a book with children because it allows

them to clearly see the print or text in the story while the teacher is reading along with either a pointer or his/her finger. The process of using a large book for Shared Reading involves repeated reading of the story until the children are able to read it on their own (Newman, 1985, p. 63). Using an enlarged text that all children can see, the teacher involves children in reading together following a pointer. This process includes: re-reading Big Books, re-reading retellings, re-reading alternative texts, re-reading the products of interactive writing (Smith & Hopffer, 1998). Teachers may use an enlarged text, either commercially produced or of their own making, and encourage the children to read it in unison (Department of Education Wellington, 1985). Through the use of high-interest stories written specifically for children in enlarged print, every child in the classroom can share in the process of hearing and seeing a story unfold (Hamayan & Pflegger, 1987). Using Big Books or enlarged texts, excites the children who are happy at the prospect of becoming readers. The children can easily follow the text as the teacher reads it because of the large illustrations and its big print. This makes big books a big part of the reading process.

The main focus of doing Shared Reading in the classroom is that it gives the child a comfortable setting in which to learn to read. Many of these children come from homes where an adult or caretaker reads to them fluently and with charm. Therefore, the teacher must continue this tradition in the classroom for the benefit of those children. For other children in the classroom however, the Shared Reading experience will probably be the first time they have ever been read to. A number of circumstances could cause this: no books in the household, parents or caregivers who do not have enough reading experience themselves, or not enough literacy support within the household which means that parents, caregivers or siblings do not read to the children. Shared Reading is particularly useful for children from non-literate backgrounds who have not been introduced to literacy in that natural, enjoyable way that most children in a literate society are (Hamayan & Pfleger, 1987).

It is important that the teacher introduce high quality, exciting, and interesting literature that will lead the children to want to learn to read and eventually enjoy it. The Shared Reading of carefully selected material provides special opportunities for convincing children that they can be readers and writers, and for

29

encouraging them to read and write in a supportive and success-oriented climate. The teacher can show children that they become involved and participate in the story, they are co-readers with the teacher and co-writers with the author. The teacher accepts all approximations as children opt in and out of the reading (Mooney, 1990 pg.25). During Shared Reading, the teacher reads books and invites children to participate, respond, and learn reading strategies that will ultimately ensure their ability to read independently (Butler, 1997).

The main purpose of Shared is Reading is that it engages all the types of readers into reading. Children participate in any way they like: as listeners, as choral readers, or as individual readers. Shared Reading relies on children's natural search for meaning. By ...nature of the situation, and adult reading a story to a child is a shared experience that invites participation by children. When listening to a favorite story that is read often, children will usually join in the reading in any that is comfortable to them. They may mumble along with the expert reader (teacher), with mumbles eventually turning into recognizable words, or they may echo read, repeating parts of the story as it is being read (Hamayan & Pfleger, 1987).

Shared Reading will ensure that the children can enjoy material they cannot as yet read for themselves, and appreciate the story as a whole, in much the same way as a completed picture in a jigsaw means more than an individual piece. Shared Reading helps develop strategies of sampling, predicting, confirming, and self-correcting for the future independent use (Department of Education Wellington, 1985). These outcomes can only occur if the Big Books used, carry repeated patterns of reading because it will create fluency of reading within the child because text will have more meaning. The material used for Shared Reading should be predictable, have illustrations which are closely related to the narrative, have a clear plot, and/or be informative (Newman, 1985, p. 63). As you and your students read poems, chants, or stories from enlarged text, you can invite students to revisit the text for different purposes, one of which is to learn about letters or words (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 170).

Shared Reading is a part of a balanced reading program for beginning readers in the primary grades. Many of the children in either kindergarten or first grade have not yet been exposed to the concept of reading. By the end of first grade for example, the children must learn to read very effectively in order to be promoted to the next

grade. This is why there is an important significance for conducting Shared Reading in the primary grades. In the primary grades, the teachers read aloud books that are appropriate for the children's interest level but too difficult for them to read for themselves. This is why Shared Reading is an important part of the reading curriculum because it allows the students to join in the reading of predictable refrains and rhyming words, and after listening to the teacher read the text several times, students often remember enough of the text to read along with the teacher (Tompkins, 2001, p. 49). The purpose of Shared Reading is for the children to understand that reading is not easy to achieve because of its difficulty, but it is fun to learn. Eventually with enough practice the children will recognize words and sentences that they will be able to read on their own.

The wonderful aspect of Shared Reading is that teachers can use it in all of the grades especially with those students at a higher grade who are struggling to read and with English language learners who need to acquire the English language in order to succeed in the class curriculum. Second language learners (ESL students) pick up rhymes and sight vocabulary and develop reading fluency from nursery rhymes and predictable books with

repetitive patterns (Routman, 1994, p. 33). If Shared Reading is an effective method for introducing the process of reading to small illiterate children, then it is good enough for those older students and ELL students who need to acquire English in order to assimilate to their English based surroundings. For reluctant and struggling readers of all ages, Shared Reading offers a non-threatening approach to reading that strengthens skills and enjoyment (Routman, 1994, p. 33).

In order to establish a lasting foundation of literate students, the teacher must use credible and useful books of literature that the children can enjoy. Stories that are suitable for Shared Reading must include:

- A strong story-line in which something actually happens.

- Characters and situations with which children identify strongly.

- Attractive illustrations which support and enhance the text.

- Humor and warmth.

- Rich and memorable language features which ensure predictability, such as rhyme, rhythm, and repetition (Butler, 1988).

Shared Reading can be done as a whole group in which the children gather around the teacher and the Big Book or it can be done in small groups in which the teacher can focus on specific reading strategies these children need in order to become effective readers. It can also be done individually as one on one instruction for a child who is a struggling reader. In this case, the teacher gives the student a smaller version of the Big Book read. This will allow the child to feel comfortable with the concept of reading because that child is already familiar with the illustrations, the text, and the story-line.

In order to ensure a successful and effective Shared Reading experience for all the students, the teacher must make sure that the Shared Reading experience is done correctly. The following is a guideline for how to conduct Shared Reading (Hamayan & Pfleger, 1987):

1.) CHOOSE A BIG BOOK:

Choose either a commercially made book or one that has been hand made by you, your class, or another teacher. It can be a big book related to the topic that is being covered at a particular time in the classroom.

2.) PLAN FOR READING THE BOOK:

List all the additional materials needed to prepare the children for reading or for activities following the Shared Reading. You may also want to list the core vocabulary to reinforce throughout the book.

3.) READ THE STORY TO THE CHILDREN:

Gather the children around you. Sometimes the easiest and most comfortable way to do a Shared Reading session is to sit on the floor (mat) with the children grouped around you. First, introduce the story by talking about it and introducing the main characters. You may do this by pointing to the pictures in the book or by acting out the story with the help of any props you may have. Then, with the help of a pointer (pencil or a ruler will do), read the story. Make sure to point to each word as it is being read, but do not let the pointer detract from the natural rhythm of the language. It is really important to maintain the intended intonation and rhythm for making the story most enjoyable for children.

4.) REREAD THE STORY AND ASK COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

After reading through the story once, go back and read it once more, this time stopping to check for

comprehension. At the early stages of language development when the children still have very limited proficiency in English, you may have to do most of the talking and will have to ask questions that allow children to respond non-verbally.

5.) STUDENTS ECHO READ:

This is usually done the day after the story has been read. You read the story in its entirety again and then invite children to echo read, that is, to repeat after you one or two sentences at a time.

6.) GROUP READING:

If the students are ready, invite them to read the story aloud. Do not force any individual child to join in the group reading, but make sure that everyone is paying attention to the story.

7.) PAIR OR SMALL GROUP READING:

If the students are ready, pair them up and give each pair either the big book that the class has been reading or the small size version of the same book, if it is available. Have each student in each pair be the reader once and the listener once. Small groups of three or four students can also be formed, and each child can take turns being the reader.

8.) DEVELOP FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES:

If the follow up is done on a subsequent day, you need to start by reading the story in its entirety to the class, as described in #3. The follow up activities suggested for the Language Experience Approach (LEA) could also be used with Shared Reading. It is imperative that children be allowed to do some "fun" activities as a follow up to Shared Reading. The following activities are appropriate:

A.) Have groups of children dramatize the story and act it out as it is read aloud.

B.) Have children individually or in pairs illustrate the story or interpret it visually in their own way. Have an exhibit of student's art-work in a prominent place, preferably where others can see it.

C.) Have children compose a variation on the story after discussing it in a group. With your help as a writer, have the class make a big book of their own.

9.) EXPERT READING TIME:

Choose a child or ask for a volunteer to be the "expert" reader. As this is a very important role for all children to play, make sure that each child, at

some point during the school year gets to be the expert reader. Early on, choose (or lead them to volunteer!) the more fluent children and hopefully, by the end of the school year, all the children will feel comfortable enough to be the expert reader.

10.) EVALUATION:

As with LEA, evaluation and constant monitoring of progress is of up-most importance. The easiest way to keep track of how the children are doing in the Shared Reading experience is to rate the children's behavior during the session.

In Shared Reading, children's contributions may range from reading in their heads or mouthing some of the words to an enthusiastic rendering, which will probably include a number of approximations. All efforts should be encouraged and accepted, with teachers being mindful that Shared Reading is more about inviting children to act as readers and writers and enjoy the story as a whole than accumulating a long lists of words named accurately (Mooney, 1990, p. 26).

Shared Reading is an integral part of the balanced literacy program. It is one of the most effective methods for introducing children to the wonderful world of reading. It is imperative that the teachers include this

in the reading curriculum of the classroom. The Shared
Reading experience will eventually lead students
struggling or not to love and enjoy the process of
reading. In order for it to be effective though, the
teacher must be aware of its benefits to all the different
types of readers in the classroom. The teacher must also
learn how to appropriately conduct a Shared Reading
experience. For without this knowledge, the children's
first experience with literature could be affected in a
negative way, destroying that child's chances of being a
successful reader. Shared Reading is an effective way to
introduce children to reading and to show children how to
read through the teachers' guidance. After all, reading is
achieved by reading and Shared Reading does exactly that.

Guided Reading

For many years and for many teachers across the
nation, the issue of how to effectively teach our children
to read has been an issue of concern. One of the concerns
for many teachers was not knowing how to adequately help
those children who needed more individualized instruction
in reading without interrupting the whole class curriculum
and the rest of those students who did not have difficulty
in the reading process. The solution was to group students

with similar reading difficulties as with struggling students or to group students with similar reading strengths as with high literate students. This type of grouping was first called ability grouping because the students were grouped according to their reading levels of high, medium or low. It is the placement of students according to similar levels of intelligence or achievement in some skill or subject, either within or among classes or schools; tracking; homogeneous grouping (Opitz, 1998, p. 10). Other people call this type of grouping flexible reading groups. Flexible grouping: allowing students to work in differently mixed groups depending on the goal of the learning task at hand (Opitz, 1998, p. 10). Today we call these reading groups Guided Reading. These groups are based on particular reading skills certain children need to acquire in order to become efficient readers.

Many children who enter the school system for the first time, already come to school with some knowledge of what print is and that in order to understand its meaning, it must be read. This knowledge of print and that print carries meaning, helps many of these children to effectively learn to read without any problems. All the children possess the fundamental attributes they need to become literate, and some may have developed a great deal

of expertise in written language by the time they enter

first grade. A few children may actually be reading and

know how to learn more about reading (Fountas & Pinell,

1996, p. 1). However, there are many children who come

into the school system without knowing that print is text

and that in order to have some meaning it must be read.

The problem is that some children do not know how to read

at all and others have reading limitations or handicaps

that impedes them from reading as a whole. It is because

of these particular students that Guided Reading should be

used and implemented as part of a balanced literacy

program.

What is Guided Reading? Guided Reading is the bridge

between shared and independent reading (Butler, 1997). In

Guided Reading the teacher and a group of children, or

sometimes an individual child, talk and think and question

their way through a book of which they each have a copy

(Routman, 1994, p. 38). Guided Reading is a technique with

specific diagnostic, instructional and evaluative intent.

It supports and encourages the development of strategies

for independence in reading within a small cluster or

group (Butler, 1994). Guided Reading is a context in which

a teacher supports each reader's development of effective

strategies for processing novel texts at increasingly

challenging levels of difficulty (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996,

p. 2). Guided Reading provides an opportunity for children

to meet in small groups to apply the demonstrated

strategies to simpler, but unfamiliar, books (Butler,

1997). It is ...an enabling and empowering approach where

the focus on the child as a long-term reader is being

shown how and why and which strategies to select and

employ to ensure that meaning is gained and maintained

during the reading and beyond (Mooney, 1990, p. 47).

Guided Reading is the heart of the Whole Language program

once children begin to read independently. It is the main

teaching technique. It is the time when children work with

a small group of 8 to 10 children to delve deeply into

books and ideas (Butler, 1994). Guided Reading allows the

teacher to observe, assess, and monitor the students

reading behaviors and thereafter group children according

to their reading abilities or reading difficulties.

The teachers' role during a Guided Reading session is

very important. During a Guided Reading session the

teacher supports and monitors the children's independent

reading behaviors, reinforcing their use of effective

strategies and re-teaching as necessary (Butler, 1997).

The teacher works with a small group who are at about the

same level in reading ability. The teacher selects and

introduces new books and supports children reading the whole text to themselves, asking teaching points during and after the reading (Smith & Hopffer, 1998). Typically, the teacher will assign books to a group of children to read independently. They then come together for a Reading Conference before responding to the text in some way. Then the responses are shared (Butler, 1997). The teacher shows the children what questions to ask of themselves as readers, and of the author through the text, so that each child can discover the author's meaning in the first reading (Routman, 1994 p.38). Guided Reading is a deliberate and supportive instructional practice where the ...teacher uses questions and comments to help children become aware of resources within themselves and in the text which will enable them (to use strategies of predicting, confirming, disconfirming, sampling, and self correcting as well as focusing on all the cueing systems (semantics, syntactic, graphophonic) to construct meaning (Goodman, 1970, 1976, 1984, 1994; Mooney, 1990).

It is through Guided Reading, however, that teachers can show children how to read and can support children as they read. Guided Reading leads to the independent reader that builds the process; it is the heart of a balanced literacy program (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 1). Teachers

observe students as they read during Guided Reading

lessons. They spend a few minutes observing each student's

behaviors for evidence of strategy use and confirm the

student's attempts to identify words and solve reading

problems (Tompkins, 2001, p. 51). Mooney (1990) gives this

advice: "Guided Reading requires the teacher to know what

attitudes, understandings, and behaviors each child in the

group will bring to the reading, as well as what supports

and challenges are offered in the book. Children should

not be introduced to Guided Reading until they have had

plenty of opportunities to listen to a wide range of

stories, poems, rhymes, and songs, and to join in Shared

Reading experiences" (p. 48).

For the teacher, Guided Reading can be a wonderful

blessing; a blessing that could enhance each and every

type of student reader in the class. In order for Guided

Reading to be effective, the teacher must be aware of the

important role he or she has in developing and

implementing this type of reading instruction which should

be a part of every teachers balanced literacy program.

Just as Guided Reading is an important part of the

literacy curriculum for teachers in order to create

successful readers, so is it for the students themselves

who may or may not be aware of their own reading

achievements or difficulties. According to Margaret Mooney (1990), Guided Reading is a way "...to develop independent readers who question, consider alternatives, and make informed choices as they seek meaning" (p. 47). It gives children the opportunity to develop as individual readers while participating in a socially supported activity. It gives children enjoyable, successful experiences in reading for meaning. It gives individual readers the opportunity to develop reading strategies so that they can read increasingly difficult texts independently (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 1). Guided Reading gives children the opportunity to develop as individual readers while participating in a socially supported activity (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 1). Guided Reading helps children gain a deeper understanding of what they read. It helps the children to explore the questions, ideas and feelings the text arouses. Guided Reading challenges children's thinking (Butler, 1997). Children have opportunities to share like reading experiences and, as a result, feel connected to one another. Reading the same book for example, provides students with a common text and ideas to share and discuss (Opitz, 1998, p. 13). Most importantly, it helps the struggling reader to develop the reading abilities and reading strategies they need in order to

become effective and successful readers. It also helps in increasing the struggling reader's self esteem.

An important aspect of Guided Reading is choosing the proper book or text for the child to read. Children need to read books of varying difficulty if they are to become strong readers. A majority of what they read should be at their independent and instructional levels (Opitz, 1998, p. 22). The text must be challenging enough in order for the teacher to observe what reading cues the child is using or not using, but it must also be easy and interesting enough for that child to read comfortably without too much struggle.

Teachers need to select texts that foster independence by allowing children to use strategies they know, yet offer one or two challenges to stretch them further (Butler, 1997). Teachers check to see that the books children are reading are at their instructional level and that they are making expected progress and continuing to progress to increasingly more difficult levels of books (Tompkins, 2001, p. 53). The teacher must select a book that contains a high percentage of known words in the story. This allows the children to use meaning as the dominant cue system which supports their predicting strategies. The teacher must make sure that the

book is interesting and appealing. The teacher must select

a book that has supporting text and illustrations so the

children will have a successful reading and at the

emergent level, the books must have rhyme, rhythm, and

repetition, or the children cannot use all three of the

cueing systems [semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic],

(Flores, 1997). A critical aspect of Guided Reading is

matching books to individual children. To accomplish this

goal with efficiency, it is necessary to organize the

books so that teachers' decisions can be easier, faster,

and more effective (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 107).

Matching children with the appropriate texts can be done

by taking a Running Record of the child reading at a

particular level and observing the reading behaviors that

the child is using as he or she is reading. Thereafter the

teacher can place a child in a particular reading group

that is based on that child's reading cues. If the teacher

chooses a text that is too difficult for a child to read,

that child will become frustrated and there is a strong

possibility that that child will give up on reading

altogether. Therefore, it is imperative that the teacher

select a book or a text that is comfortable enough for the

child to read. This will increase the child's self-esteem

because that child will feel as if he or she is becoming a

fluent reader and therefore he or she will continue to read with enthusiasm and eventually achieve the goal of becoming a high literate child.

Guided Reading is an effective method for introducing children to the concept of reading. Moreover, it is a literacy teaching method that helps students acquire the reading skills, and strategies they need in order to become efficient readers. Above all, it is a literacy teaching method that not only creates excellent readers, but it also creates self-esteem in children who are struggling to read. With all these advantages to guided reading, it is important that the teacher know how to conduct and organize an effective guided reading session. Therefore, this is a Suggested Teaching Sequence For Guided Reading (Butler, 1994):

1.) DECIDE ON THE FOCUS:

- What reading behaviors are established?

- What needs to be practiced?

- What reading strategies need consolidating?

- What reading behaviors need demonstration and development?

2.) SELECT AN APPROPRIATE TEXT:

- Does it support the focus?

48

- Does it provide sufficient challenge?

- Does it have interest and appeal?

3.) SET THE SCENE:

- Initiate discussion that arouses children's interest in the book and motivate them to use their developing reading strategies.

- Talk about the cover-encourage predictions.

- Read the title, author, illustrator.

- Discuss experiences that may help children link the book to experiences in their own lives.

4.) READ THE TEXT:

- Proceed to the title page-reread the title and talk about the illustration. Help children focus on any details in the story-line that will help them make further predictions.

- "Talk" the children through the book, page by page, inviting them to talk about what they see in the illustrations.

- Focus attention on details that will help children to learn how to cope with the challenges they meet. Have them read samplings of text to confirm their predictions.

- Having guided the children to the author's idea, they now read the book independently within the group. The teacher observes and supports as necessary.

5.) RETURN TO THE TEXT:

- Discuss the story with the children.

- Invite individual comments and opinions. Value the children's varied responses.

- Have children reread the story in pairs, independently within the group.

- Take advantage of the possibilities for teaching reading skills and strategies in the context of the story.

6.) RESPOND TO THE TEXT:

- Listen to the spontaneous responses the children make.

- Suggest they talk to a friend about aspects of the story that really interests them.

- Reread all or parts of the book once more. Rereading deepens and extends the children's understanding of the text.

- Demonstrate and facilitate creative responses that extend and complement reading.

7.) WAYS TO RESPOND:

- Rereading

- Writing

- Arts and crafts

- Dramatization

- Let children suggest their own activities.

Starting a child in Guided Reading is not always easy. There are certain aspects of a child's reading behavior that must be observed by the teacher. This can be done through Running Records, or taking anecdotal notes of the child's reading behavior as the child is reading. This type of assessment will help the teacher place the child in the adequate reading group that is best for him or her. In order to help a teacher know when a child should be placed in a Guided Reading session, the teacher may follow some Guided Reading indicators (Butler, 1994). The indicators for when to commence guided reading are:

1.) Participates actively and reads along accurately when you are rereading a <u>familiar</u> book during a Shared Reading.

2.) Makes plausible predictions when you are Reading Aloud or doing Shared Reading.

3.) Contributes to the class the problem solving of
a difficult word during Shared Reading
(especially with oral cloze).

4.) Can identify most of the letters of the alphabet
by name and pronounce the predominant sounds
they represent in context.

5.) Can recognize some high-frequency words in
context.

1.) Can reread familiar books independently with
high degree of accuracy (previously read and
reread in Shared Reading).

2.) Regularly chooses to "read" during choice time.

3.) Shows interest in print and reading e.g., Asks
constantly *What does that say? Often tells you
That begins with__.*

4.) Can read back their own written stories and oral
dictation.

5.) Asks directly or indirectly to be allowed to
read or be taught to read. *Can I read this book
please? Listen to me read.*

Guided Reading is a Shared Reading experience between
the teacher and the student and the student with the other
students of his or her reading group. Guided Reading is
also a reciprocal teaching method that will allow the

teacher to adequately place a child in a particular

reading group based on that child's reading skills or lack

of. In return the child will help the teacher by showing

the reading behaviors he or she is using or not using so

that the teacher can develop useful reading strategies the

child needs in order to read adequately. The teacher must

understand that each child is in the role of a reader with

his or her own copy of the book. The teacher acts as a

facilitator to set the scene and, through skillful

questioning, engages the children in a discussion that

enables them to unfold the story and confidently read the

text themselves (Butler, 1994). A good understanding of

assessment, matching children with books, and Guided

Reading will help children get the most out of the books

they read and set them on the path to becoming successful

independent readers (Butler, 1997).

The most important aspect of the Guided Reading

experience is that the child is reading for him or

herself. In other words Guided Reading is reading by

children (Butler, 1994). Without the implementation of

Guided Reading as part of a balanced literacy program, the

struggling reader would not be able to become a successful

reader. The teacher's observations, the assessments and

the placement of children in accordance with their reading

inhibitions or limitations, and the reading strategies the teacher implements to help the struggling reader are valuable in a session of Guiding Reading because eventually those children who are struggling to read will become effective readers.

Phonics

The teaching of phonics has been a source of controversy since Rudolph Flesh's (1955) book *Why Johnny Can't Read*. Chall (1967) addressed the debate in her book *Learning To Read: The Great Debate*, concluding that a code emphasis approach produced better reading achievement than a meaning-emphasis one (Manning & Manning, 1989, p. 73). Some phonics advocates point to the fact that there is a certain amount of consistency in grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) correspondences and make use of this consistency to support the approach (Dudgeon, 1989).

The role of Phonics in reading, in learning to read and in reading instruction is probably the most widely misunderstood and misrepresented aspect of language education today (Goodman, 1993, p. 1). The debate of whether Phonics or the Whole Language approach is best to teach reading to our students is still raging on. Some teachers believe that the Whole Language approach (the

whole-to-part-to-whole) approach is the best way. Other
teachers swear on the efficacy of using Phonics only
instruction (parts-to-whole) to teach reading. Before
anyone can truly understand what reading method works
best, one must know and understand both methods first.

Phonics instruction is a way of teaching reading that
stresses learning how letters correspond to sounds and how
to use this knowledge in reading and spelling. The goal is
help children understand that there is a systematic and
predictable relationship between written letters and
spoken sounds (CIERA, 2001; Antunez, 2001). In other
words, phonics consists essentially on sounding out the
letters and blending the sounds to produce spoken words in
order to understand them through their spoken form (Lado,
1981-82). Therefore, the relationship between the
phonological aspects of language (the sounds) and the
graphic signs (the letters and combinations of letters) is
an important source of information for readers (Sue &
Pinnell, 1996, p. 164).

There are several educators who claim that Phonics
should not be scrutinized or criticized but that it should
be made a part of a balanced literacy program. Students
use Phonics information to decode words, but Phonics
instruction is not a complete reading program because only

about half of our words can be decoded easily and because good readers do much more than just decode words when they read (Tompkins, 2001, p. 17). This is why Phonics as a part of a whole should be implemented in a well balanced literacy curriculum.

Sometimes people talk about Phonics as if it means "decontextualized direct instruction which focuses on the set of rules establishing the relationship between sounds of letter and their names." When Phonics carries this meaning, Phonics and Whole Language are not compatible. ...[W]hen Phonics is used to mean "knowledge about sound-symbol relationships in language, "Then...Phonics and Whole Language are quite compatible (Mills, O'keefe, & Stephens, 1992, p. xi). Because several researchers don't believe in using Phonics only as an attainment of literacy, the adequacy of the skills-based approach has been challenged over the years by many reading experts, (Goodman, 1970; Smith, 1973), and there is research evidence that the model, by itself, is not an effective way of teaching reading to either LEP children or adults.

Therefore, the question is no longer *if* Phonics should be taught but rather *how* Phonics should be taught meaningfully. Successful readers view reading as an interactive, meaning-getting process, and graphophonics is

one of the necessary cueing systems they utilize. Semantic

cues (context: what makes sense) and syntactic cues

(knowledge of structure and grammar: what sounds right

grammatically) are cueing systems the reader needs to be

using already in order for Phonics (letter-sound

relationships: what looks right visually and sounds right

phonetically) to make sense (Routman, 1991, p. 147).

In an experiment done by Goodman between having

children read unfamiliar words in isolation and thereafter

reading unfamiliar words in complete sentences, Goodman

reasoned that the children would do better in identifying

unfamiliar words in the stories than in the lists because

"in lists," children had only cues within printed words

while in stories they had the additional cues in the flow

of the language to help them figure out new print words

(Moustafa, 1997, p. 17). This means that a child can be

taught to decode individual words through sound letter

correspondences or syllable to syllable correspondences,

but it must then be placed back in context in whole

reading such as reading a whole sentence which will make

sense. For example, a child can come across a word in a

sentence that he or she cannot decode correctly, but

because the child has the rest of the words in the

sentence to read, the child can use these additional clues

to help him or her read the word that could not be decoded. In addition to having extra clues to help in the reading process, that child also absorbed meaning. One must remember that decoding is not reading until there is a natural language flow of reading coming out of he child's mouth and meaning is present.

Whole-to-parts Phonics instruction differs from traditional Phonics instruction in that (1) it teaches the parts of the words after a story has been read *to*, *with*, and *by* children rather than before the story is read by children, and (2) it teaches the psychological units of the syllable (in English, letter-onset and letter-rime correspondences; in Spanish, syllables) rather than letter-phoneme correspondences (Moustafa, 1997, p. 93). Hamayan and Pfleger (1987) cautions educators about the use of the Phonics approach alone because: unfortunately, English is a language that does not have a very high ratio of symbol-to-sound correspondence. This is because some letters represent more than one sound and some sounds represent more than one letter (Dudgeon, 1989).

This however, is not true of the Spanish language. Attainment of Spanish literacy differs slightly from attainment of literacy in the English language, in that Spanish has more consistent letter to sound

correspondences as well as syllable-to-syllable correspondences. Thus, some pedagogues assume that this orthographic feature leads many Spanish-speaking children to read effectively and fluently in their native tongue. It also shows how important it is for non-English speaking children to be taught to read in their native tongue. Literacy skills learned in the native language can be transferred over to the mainstream language, which is English. Consequently, this makes bilingual children successful readers in both languages.

Thirty years of research has established that the best entry into literacy is a child's native language (Clay, 1993a; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). For more than six million Spanish-speaking children in the U.S. public schools, this means that their initial literacy instruction should preferably occur in Spanish (Brown, 1992; Escamilla, 2000). Because literacy achievement should be done in a child's native language, in this case Spanish, it is important that the child be taught to read correctly and effectively in order to become a fluent reader.

In Spanish literacy attainment, the teacher must first teach the students letter sound correspondences especially, the vowels (a, e, i, o, u) which should be

taught before any other letter sound correspondences found in the Spanish language. The first task of *Identificación de Letras* (Letter Identification) seeks to observe what children know about letters, sounds of letters and beginning sounds in words (Escamilla, 2000). Adams (1990) suggests that knowledge of letter names and ability to discriminate phonemes in an auditory way is the best predictor of success in first grade. "Pre-readers" letter knowledge was the single best predictor of first-year reading achievement, with their ability to discriminate phonemes auditorily ranking as a close second" ...knowledge of letters and Phonemic Awareness are pre-requisites to learning to read [p. 36], (Escamilla, 2000). ...[O]nce children learn letter-sound correspondences, they do not have to be taught each word, one by one. Rather they can use their knowledge of the letter-sound system to figure out how to say print words they have never seen before without help from another reader (Moustafa, 1997. p. 15).

In several bilingual school sites, the kindergarten teachers across each site explicitly taught academic reading skills (e.g., phonics, syllables, sight words) in order to prepare students for the rigors of grade 1 reading instruction. Teachers undertook direct teaching of

letters and sounds of the alphabet. Naturally, the
students were read to by their teachers and were also
engaged in some meaning based reading activities (Barrera
& Jimenez, 2000,). In bilingual classrooms Phonics
instruction such as teaching the children the letters and
the sounds that correspond to them is an important part of
literacy teaching. However, Whole Language literacy
teaching is also included while the teacher is still
teaching Phonics. This can be achieved through mini
lessons done during Read Alouds or Shared Reading/Writing
by the teacher.

While in beginning reading consonants are first
taught in English, vowels should be first taught in
Spanish. In addition, phonological and syntactic awareness
in Spanish are best taught as an integral part of reading
and writing (Ramirez, n.d.). Our research has indicated
that, as Spanish-speaking children learn to write, vowels
emerge before consonants in their writing. Research in the
teaching of reading in Mexico (Escamilla, 1999; Ferreiro,
Pellicer, Rodriquez, Silva, & Vernon, 1994) ...suggests
that vowels are best taught before consonants in beginning
reading programs. Further, in many Spanish reading
programs, children are taught vowel sounds first in
beginning reading. They are then taught to combine vowel

sounds with consonants to form syllables (Escamilla, 2000). The teaching of vowels and their sounds before the teaching of consonants allows the child to be able to put syllables together because once the child has acquired the knowledge of vowel letter/sound correspondences, that same child can now combine them with the consonant/sounds to form syllables. This then allows the child to begin writing through invented spelling and begin the process of reading.

The syllable forms the cornerstone in teaching children to begin to de-code words in Spanish (Ferreiro, Pellicer, Rodriquez, Silva & Vernon, 1994; Escamilla, 2000). Research on Spanish-speaking children (Escamilla, Andrade, Basurto, & Ruiz, 1996; Escamilla & Coady, 2000) indicates that Spanish-speaking children also use patterns as they develop as readers and writers (Escamilla, 2000).

Research on Spanish-speaking children (Escamilla, Andrade, Basurto, & Ruiz, 1996; Escamilla & Coady, 2000) indicates that Spanish-speaking children also use patterns as they develop as readers and writers (Escamilla, 2000). In lower grades (i.e, k-1) word analysis skills used to "decode" syllables and words were the focus of instruction (Barrera & Jimenez, 2000). The logic of reasoning follows as such: Once Spanish speaking students have learned the

letter sound correspondences of the vowels and the

consonants they are then taught by the teacher to put the

vowels and the consonants together to form simple

syllables. Thereafter, the children can put together more

longer and complex syllables to form words that are now

readable and writeable to them. This predictable pattern

then allows the child to be able read words and write them

syllabically. This same pattern also leads them to be able

to decode vowel and consonant blends that are more

difficult to decode.

Because teachers are well aware of the importance of

this patterned decoding reading strategy for Spanish

readers, they must make sure that the students are getting

additional reading instruction at home from their parents

in order to reinforce their children's literacy

attainment. Latino parents' view on the reading process

and learning to read-particularly in Spanish-have been

found to be reductionistic or "bottom-up" in nature,

emphasizing parts of language, such as letters, sounds,

and syllables, rather than wholes (Goldenberg, 1987;

Goldenberg, Reese, & Gallimore, 1992; Valdes, 1996;

Barrera & Jimenez, 2000). According to these educators,

this means that, when helping their children learn to

read, parents tend to focus on sound-letter relationships

and on blending letters into syllables and words, combined

with a high degree of repetition (Goldenberg et al.,

1992). In some cases, parents may not strive to teach

their children the alphabet because the ability to recite

it is not considered particularly important in home

countries such as Mexico where "recognition of syllables

containing a consonant and a vowel is considered

fundamental to reading" (Valdes, 1996, p. 166; Barrera &

Jimenez, 2000). Teachers are very well aware that Spanish

speaking parents know and understand the importance of

Spanish literacy decoding since they learned it themselves

in their Spanish speaking country. However, teachers can

make sure that these parents are not only a part of the

Phonics process, but also of the Whole Language process.

This can be done by the teachers making sure that the

parents are reading to their children every night or

perhaps the teacher can send home well patterned books

that the children have read in class and have them read it

to their parents. This will help balance out the reading

program between Whole Language and Phonic instruction.

Thus, it should not be surprising that schools

teaching reading in Spanish spend more time teaching print

awareness, phonological awareness, letter-sound

relationships, vocabulary development, and comprehension

skills or what is basically the balance of the mandated curriculum (Guerrero & Sloan, 2001). This is done by the teacher as a reinforcement of the balanced literacy program which the children may not be receiving at home.

It is important that all educators understand that although they differ, both the Phonics approach and the Whole Language approach, ...share a basic assumption: they both assume that learning to read is a parts-to-whole process. As children learn the parts of reading-letters or words-they will understand the whole (Moustafa, 1997, p. 5). All teachers should also know that literacy instruction in any language should include more than teaching decoding and skills. Effective literacy programs, in both Spanish and English, should include a balance between teaching skills, developing comprehension, learning to respond to and appreciate literature, reading to learn, and reading for pleasure (Escamilla, 2000). Vernon and Ferreiro (1999, 2000) suggest that, for Spanish-speaking students, Phonemic Awareness needs to be developed concurrently with learning to read and write. ...[T]hey conclude that phonemic and phonological awareness are not pre-requisites to reading, but are integral components of the reading process. As such, they are best taught in Spanish, in the context of reading and

writing (Escamilla, 2000). It is imperative that the teacher allow opportunities for the child to write as that child is learning to read. This can be done through interactive journals between the teacher and the students, having the child write about a favorite book they just learned to read or having the child create his or her own predictable or patterned book. Doing this allows the child to not only love to read and write, but to also understand the strong relationship there is between reading and writing as a whole.

Just because a bilingual teacher teaches Phonics does not mean that it cannot be correlated with Whole Language or the Language Experience Approach (LEA). A teacher teaching children to read in Spanish, a language that is not an onset-rime language, can use a similar strategy to teach letter-sound correspondences in Spanish. Again, after a predictable story is read *to, with,* and *by* children, the teacher can ask the children for their favorite words in the story. Then, rather than highlighting letters that represent onsets or rimes, the teacher can highlight letters representing the psychologically salient unit in Spanish syllables, (e.g., *ca-* or *-sa* in *casa*) and tell the children "These letters say /ka/" or "These letters say /sa/" (Moustafa, 1997).

The teacher can conduct mini lessons during Shared/modeled reading or Shared/modeled writing such as reading or writing words syllabically in front of the children which the children can learn and use on their own through independent reading or interactive journals. In other words, Phonics instruction in Spanish literacy can occur simultaneously with the process of Whole Language reading and writing with positive effects.

Teaching children to read in Spanish is NOT the same as teaching children to read in English. It is both inappropriate and irresponsible to pretend that differences across languages do not exist (Escamilla, 2000). This is why it is important that children learn to read in their native tongue as opposed to the mainstream language. If children know how to speak in their native tongue, then they will be able to read in their native tongue more easily. The reason why bilingual children are successful readers in Spanish is because Spanish literacy has a more predictable pattern of reading since the combination of Spanish letters and their sounds are not complicated.

...[T]he point of Spanish and Indian languages, is that since they have more "regular" grapheme-phoneme correspondence, it is much easier for the student to learn

to read initially in the native language by introducing the relationship between sound and letter, using Phonics as the basic focus (NCELA). According to some educators, some languages are easier to learn to read than others. The greater the phonetic correspondence between the written symbol and the sounds, the easier the language is to decode and consequently to read. Decoding skills are easier to learn in Spanish or Navajo because the Spanish and Navajo written codes are phonetically consistent with the oral language (NCELA, 1975, p. 52). However, these assumptions are strictly based on an orthographic feature that Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) question based on their psychogenesis research.

Learning to read is learning to makes sense of written language. No method which focuses only on "decoding" (we prefer to call it recoding), whether on a phoneme-grapheme, syllable-spelling pattern, or word level can be considered a complete instructional program for any language, no matter how "regularly" it is spelled (NCELA). No matter what language a child is reading in, whether it be in English or Spanish, the most important teaching method a teacher can use to help the child with the process of reading is to use both Phonics and the Whole

Language Approach. This will allow the students to achieve and experience a high balanced literacy program.

In order to create high fluent readers, literacy instruction in Spanish should be as beneficial as literacy instruction in English. Spanish literacy programs should be based on what is known about how to bring Spanish-speaking children to literacy (Escamilla, 2000). Also program design, teacher qualifications and commitment, the quality and availability of instructional materials, the integrity of the curriculum, and the validity of the tests used to measure reading ability that can influence how well young Spanish-speaking students learn to read in Spanish (Guerrero & Sloan, 2001). Bilingual teachers owe it to their students.

The choice of whether to implement Whole Language strategies or Phonics only strategies to teach literacy is based solely on the teachers experiences with not only one method, but with both, and thereafter the teacher/educator can make the decision of which method is best for the literacy based curriculum in their own classroom.

Whole Language

Teaching is never a neutral activity. Children learn about themselves and about you by the way you interact

with them everyday. When you listen attentively to what they say, for example, they learn that you consider their ideas and their language to be interesting and informative. When you surround the children with books and print, and encourage all their attempts at reading and writing, they see for themselves the value of becoming literate (Nos, n.d.). Having children become literate should be the goal and hope of every teacher across the nation. A child who cannot read, is a child with no educational future. As teachers, we owe our students a successful education and this begins with reading and writing. Most teachers believe that the use of Whole Language in the classroom is the most effective way to achieve this.

One approach that has been implemented by many educators to develop and improve literacy skills is whole language (Dudley-Marling & Rhodes, 1988). Whole language is a way of teaching and thinking that is growing in popularity throughout the world. It is a program in which reading, writing, listening and talking are integrated in a stimulating natural language-learning environment (Butler, 1987). Whole Language instruction takes into account the whole learner and builds on his or her total array of skills and abilities (Goodman, 1986). A teacher

must take into account the knowledge that each student brings into the classroom and then build on this knowledge to reach each student's zone of proximal development. In other words, the teacher must take the child from where he/she was intellectually at one point, and then take that child even further intellectually through the use of that child's already built in knowledge.

According to Bess Alwerger, Carole Edelsky, and Barbara Flores, "Whole Language is not practice. It is a set of beliefs, a perspective." ...[T]hese authors emphasize that Whole Language is not a whole-word approach with the focus on "getting the words." Rather it is one of constructing meaning from text, using cues that include words, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Neither is Whole Language teaching skills in context. One of its goals is to have students "become skilled language users," not just learners of separate language skills (Altwerger, Edelsky, & Flores, 1987; Manning & Manning, 1989, p. 9). Harste and Burke explained that when language is kept whole (rather than divided into often meaningless small parts), readers use all three cue systems together. Consider the sentence "Mary and Tom took a long walk down the tree-lined ____." Using their knowledge of the syntax, or grammar of language, readers can predict what might come next in the

71

sentence. In a Whole Language approach, this can be done

with the children as a Read Aloud or in a Shared Reading

experience. Indeed, it is not necessary for readers to

know or even to have heard the words syntax or syntactic

or grammar to be able to figure out that the last word

will be some sort of thing (Mills, O'keefe, & Stephens,

1992, p. xi). The process of prediction cannot be

accredited to Phonics, but to Whole Language because

reading should come as natural as speaking and thinking

where there is no interruption of flow. Children will do

best if their approach is not fragmented by learning

skills in isolation, words out of context, structure

patterns unattached to meanings (Department of Education

Wellington, 1985). Thus activities revolve around specific

content in a real communicative situation and not around

language in an abstract form. Children are encouraged to

take risks and to use language in all its varieties and at

all levels of proficiency (Hamayan & Pfleger, 1987). Whole

Language is thus a perspective on language and language

acquisition with classroom implications extending far

beyond literacy (Manning & Manning, 1989, p. 10).

"...[W]hole Language instruction-the current

meaning-emphasis approach to beginning reading-tends to be

associated with a natural, "developmental" and open view

(Goodman, 1993; p. 101). This approach is a body of belief about learning, teaching and the role of language in the classroom that impacts upon the entire curriculum (McInerney, 1988; Raines & Canady, 1990). Whole language... has been motivated in part by... informed teachers to use new knowledge about language development and learning to build better, more effective, and more satisfying experiences for their pupils and themselves (Goodman, Goodman, & Hood, 1989, p. xi). In a Whole Language classroom, teachers create a stimulating environment which supports natural language learning. This means that teachers plan language-enriching experiences-replicating as closely as possible the conditions that existed when children were learning their native tongue (Butler, 1987).

Proponents of Whole Language insist that the methods used by Whole Language teachers are more responsive to the needs and interests of children than are traditional teaching methods (Gursky, 1991). Teachers take in-to account all of the individual abilities and skills the children bring into the classroom. These skills are then enhanced by the teachers using several different teaching strategies that are best suited for the student in order to achieve learning in all the areas of the curriculum

especially in literacy. Teachers view students as children
with whole needs not just individual needs. Teachers
cannot achieve to teach a child the curriculum if they
only focus on those parts of the curriculum the child
can't learn. Therefore, teaching the whole of the
curriculum will allow the child the opportunity to sample
all the areas in the curriculum. An example of this would
be to have the child read a patterned book about
caterpillars independently and thereafter, having that
same child write his or her own patterned book. This
allows the child to bring his own experience as a reader
and apply it to writing.

Goodman's demonstration that children use their
knowledge of language to figure out print words in stories
has an important implication for beginning reading
materials for children. Goodmans' findings suggest that
children need another type of reading material in which
the flow of language is natural. This insight gave rise to
a new approach to teaching children to read called the
Whole Language Approach. Rhode points that children read
Whole Language text better than letter-emphasis, or
phonics (Moustafa, 1997, p. 19). Whole Language teachers
do teach Phonics but not as something separate from actual
reading and writing (Nos, n.d).

Of the three methods (the letter-emphasis [or

phonics] approach, the word-emphasis [or whole word]

approach, and the whole language approach), the whole

language approach is the only one to be developed through

research rather than before research (Moustafa, 1997,

p. 19). This research has led various teachers to redirect

their teaching philosophies away from an only Phonics

Approach to reading, into a Whole Language reading and

writing approach. In doing so these teachers now believe

that children should be taught to read naturally. This

means that the flow of words coming out of the child's

mouth should be as natural as if he or she were speaking

without thinking. Children convey whole meaning even when

they utter single words; thus, "up" may mean "I want to go

upstairs," "pick me up" or even "put me down". Besides

unfamiliar words that occur in natural language are almost

always recognized or understood through the context that

they are in. (Hamayan & Pfleger, 1987).

The Whole Language approach is centered around a

balanced literacy program. A balanced literacy program is

organized around observations of the ways children learn

to read (Holdaway, 1979,1984; Butler & Turbill, 1984;

Baltas & Shafer, 1996). Children learn to read by seeing

others read, having others read aloud to them, reading

with others, and reading by themselves and to others.
Teachers invite pupils to use language. Get them to talk
about things they need to understand. Show them it's all
right to ask questions and listen to the answers, and then
to react or ask more questions. They suggest that they
write about what happens to them, so they can come to
grips with their experiences and share them with others
(Goodman, 1986, p. 7).

...[C]lassroom experience should include reading to
children, reading with children, and reading by children.
A balanced literacy program must also include rich
language experience involving speaking and writing, and
instruction in reading skills and strategies, both planned
and spontaneous (Baltas & Shafer, 1996).

Both Whole Language and Language Experience paint
images of rich language environments; Both emphasize the
importance of literature. Both treat reading as a personal
act, arguing for the need to accept and work with whatever
language varieties a child brings to school (Manning &
Manning, 1980, p. 17). In this case, the teacher must
accept the native language of all the students that come
into the classroom and use various teaching strategies
that emphasize and support the student's native tongue.
Several researchers claim that all the curriculum skills

learned in the native language, will transfer over to the English language successfully. According to Krashen (1996), the use of the students' native tongue provides them with knowledge and literacy. The development of these two factors, coupled with comprehensible input in English, accelerates the student's English acquisition process (Ramos, 2001). Whole Language enables the teacher to help children explore, record, consider, read about, and share their experience, feelings, and ideas through talking, reading, and writing. The teacher can record children's language and provide opportunities for writing to be shared through the other "to, with, and by" approaches to reading (Mooney, 1990, p. 41).

A balanced Whole Language program typically includes the following ten elements (Butler, 1987):

- Reading to children

  One of the most effective ways of hooking children onto books is to read them quality literature. It affects their reading habits and greatly enhances their writing abilities.

- Shared book experience

  Shared book experience involves a teacher and a whole class of children sitting close together while they

share in the reading and re-reading of appealing

rhymes, songs, poems, and of course stories.

- Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

Sustained silent reading (SSR) is an activity which

everyone, including the teacher, simply reads for an

extended period of time.

- Guided Reading

Guided reading is the heart of the Whole Language

program once children can read independently. It is

the time when the teacher works with a small group of

8 to 10 children to delve deeply into books and

ideas.

- Individualized reading

During individualized reading, children work at their

own pace on material particularly suited to their

needs and instructional level.

- Language experience

Language experience is a method of teaching that is

based on the language generated orally by the

children during a first-hand or vicarious experience.

This oral language is recorded by...the children...,

or by a scribe... It is then made available to the

children in written format that is neat and readable.

This draws on the reader's personal experience and is written in the reader's own language...This makes the language experience method particularly beneficial for remedial and for children for whom English is a second language.

- Children's writing

Writing is a process that involves thinking, talking, and reading-as well as the writing itself. A writer needs time and opportunity to think about what is to be written, to make decisions about the writing before, during and after drafting and then revise ...so the piece can be...presented to the intended reader with the expectation of a positive response.

- Modeled writing

Modeled writing provides an opportunity for children to see and hear an "expert" writer in action. Modeled writing involves composing in front of children, articulating the processes they are going through, and explaining why they are doing what they are doing.

- Opportunities for sharing

Sharing time provides the opportunity to present a finished piece of work to an audience. It is a time for getting feedback from one's peers.

- Content area reading and writing

  Reading is not a Forty-five Minute Period of
  Instruction with Behavioral Objectives and
  Predictable outcomes...Reading is All Day-, Being and
  Becoming-, Growing and Growing (Whitelaw, p. 145).
  Each content area places its own unique demand on the
  reader and the writer. The learner reader/writer
  needs the same supportive conditions for learning
  when writing a social studies essay as when writing
  personal narrative (Butler, 1988).

In a Whole Language classroom children are immersed in,
steeped in, surrounded by books and book talk. This means
they are immersed in a flood of the language and the
conventions of books. Books are readily available, usually
displayed attractively to entice the learner to pick them
up. The reading that is done is valued. The writing that
is done is valued (Butler, 1987). It order for children to
become effective writers, teachers should write in front
of children. In doing so:

- They demonstrate ways of getting started:
  brainstorming, outlining, grouping ideas, or
  splurge writing.

- They demonstrate editing strategies: cutting,
  and pasting, using inserts, and so on.

- They show how to apply the conventions of
  spelling, grammar and punctuation in context.

- Teachers "talk on the run", explaining why they
  are doing what they are doing when they are
  doing it.

Teachers read in front of the children (sometimes
using enlarged texts) in order to provide models of
expressive reading. They demonstrate reading strategies in
context: word solving strategies; book conventions; and a
variety of reading behaviors, to suit different texts and
purposes. During these countless demonstrations, the
children are not merely passive observers. They are
actively engaged in the learning at all times. Engagement
occurs when learners become sufficiently motivated by
...the teachers demonstrations to want to have a go by
themselves. ...In other words, engagement occurs when
learners have a desire to learn (Butler, 1987).

Read Alouds, Shared Reading and writing and other
modeled teaching strategies that are done by the Whole
Language teacher in front of the children are beneficial
because it allows the students to see how speaking,
reading and writing should occur because eventually they
will be doing this independently. There are four

essentials that characterize Whole Language teachers
(Goodman, Goodman, & Hood, 1989, p. 16):

- Whole Language teachers understand how children
  learn and how language develops.

- Whole Language teachers are skilled observers of
  children. They are kid-watchers.

- Whole Language teachers have a clear, long-range
  vision of their instructional purpose and goals.

- Whole Language teachers engage in continual
  evaluation of and reflection upon their students
  and themselves.

In a Whole Language classroom, teachers have a strong
expectation that learning will occur, and they constantly
convey this positive attitude to the children. Teachers
and children share the responsibility for learning.
Teachers expect the children to take on more and more
responsibility for their own learning as they progress
through primary school, and they show them how (Butler,
1987).

Most importantly, teachers need to become skilled
observers of children so they can give guidance and help
with any problems the children are grappling with (Butler,
1987). Constant assessment of each student's progress in

all areas of the curriculum is important because it allows

the teacher to view each student's strengths and

weaknesses that might need more individualized attention.

The teacher can use different teaching strategies such as

Whole Language strategies that can help the child attain a

higher level of learning...[W]hole language teachers are

also careful "kidwatchers" (Goodman, 1985) and use their

knowledge base to reflect on their observations of

children and to make informed instructional decisions .

Teachers need to gather resources and plan activities they

think will be as meaningful and purposeful to the children

as possible. At the same time they involve children in

decision-making. As teachers we started watching our

students more closely. We had to learn to use our growing

understanding of language and literacy development to help

us make sense of what the students were showing us. We

needed to observe how they engaged in learning-to

"kid-watch" as Yetta Goodman (1980) calls it-so that we

would be better able to offer experiences which supported

those learning efforts. Because the students were

exploring various aspects of literacy we learned that

activities had to be broad enough to accommodate many

different experiments simultaneously (Newman, 1985, p. 2).

The aspect of Whole Language can be somewhat controversial for some teachers. Today, there are still teachers who believe wholeheartedly in using Phonics only instruction to gain literacy success. Moreover, there are some teachers who are afraid of the concept of Whole Language and therefore do not implement it in their classroom curriculum. These teachers may be afraid of change. There are however, some teachers who use it extensively and wholeheartedly in their classrooms and the success stories of high literacy attainment and writing skills are numerous. As teachers, we must always investigate and research on what instructional methods are best for our students. After teachers do that, then they can make the decision of whether to implement it in their classrooms or not. One cannot say that something is ineffective without first trying it.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Literacy Instruction for Spanish Speaking Bilingual First Graders

No one can argue that literacy attainment is an important, if not the most important aspect of a child's education. Without literacy, the rest of the classroom curriculum will not make sense. This is why it is crucial that the teaching of reading be done properly, effectively and in the child's native language especially in the first years of school such as in first grade.

Before a Spanish-speaking child can begin the process of reading, that child must first have acquired some Phonemic Awareness. Phonemic Awareness is a child's awareness that individual sounds are components of language that when put together they make words. Phonemic Awareness is first taught in a kindergarten or first grade setting. According to some experts, it is a prerequisite to Phonics instruction and it is an integral component of beginning reading. The most important aspect of Phonemic Awareness is for the child to learn the sounds of each of the letters of the alphabet especially the vowels since they are an important component of the Spanish Phonics process. Some educators believe that letter recognition

must be learned first before sound recognition. This is not always the case. Through formal assessments done on some first graders, it has been discovered that some children can recognize a letter's sound first and thereafter recognize the letter itself. Other children however, will learn both letter and sound recognition simultaneously. There should be no serious concern as to how a child will obtain letter and sound recognition. In time, both will be achieved without hindering the reading process.

After a child has achieved Phonemic Awareness, the Spanish-speaking child is now ready for Phonics instruction. Phonics instruction begins with the child learning to put two or more letter sounds together, not to create a word yet, but to create a *sílaba* (Syllable). In Spanish Phonics instruction, syllables are first taught because Spanish is a syllabic language. Making syllables visible to the children shows them how the graphophonemic cueing system works.

The first graphophonics instruction in Spanish literacy begins by teaching a child to put two letters together such as "m" and "a" and then asking that child to sound out each of their sounds and afterwards having the

child put those sounds together to create the syllable "ma".

Once the child is able to read a *sílaba* (syllable) quickly and with ease, then the child is ready to read two syllable combinations which form words. For example, "ma" and "pa". If the child did not have any problems with one syllable combinations, then the child should be able to read this two syllable combination to form the word *mapa* (map). As before, if the child can read two syllable words without any problems, then the teacher should proceed the child to practice decoding three or four syllable words like "ma, le, ta" which reads *maleta* (suitcase) or "re, ca, ma, ra" which reads *recámara* (bedroom). Once the child has accomplished this decoding process successfully, then the child is ready to begin the Whole Language approach. On the other hand, if the child is still struggling decoding two, three or four syllable words, then more graphophonics decoding instruction is needed for the struggling child before the Whole Language instruction can be introduced.

Whereas Phonics instruction is used to help a child decode words for reading fluency, the Whole Language Approach introduces the emergent reader to his/her first literacy experience. It must be noted however that the

Whole Language Approach does not eliminate Phonics instruction altogether. On the contrary, the Whole Language approach without some Phonics instruction can hinder the reading process because Phonics and Whole Language instruction go hand in hand. Each one helps balance the emergent reader's first literacy experience.

The Whole Language Approach begins by introducing the child to a book that is carefully chosen by the teacher. The book chosen should not be too easy but yet challenging enough for the child to use all the cueing systems taught by the teacher. The Whole Language Approach allows the child to understand that individual sounds make words and that words create sentences and that sentences put in context, create a meaningful fun story to be read. Furthermore, the children come into the realization that the pictures of the book are related to the text they are reading which is an important mediated reading strategy that will help them with their literacy proficiency.

The Whole Language Approach is best effective when done in small groups such as in a Mini Shared Reading procedure (which will be explained later) or a Guided Reading procedure. In these two procedures the children are grouped together based on either the children's independent reading levels or similar needed reading

strategies to help them in the reading process. In small groups the teacher can facilitate the child's reading process by making visible to the child the cueing systems needed for successful reading. Also, mini lessons can be conducted by the teacher during small group reading instruction especially graphophonics instruction which is still needed during the Whole Language Approach experience.

The Whole Language Approach which still includes some Phonic instruction, is best effective when the teacher assesses and is aware of each child's reading weaknesses and strengths. It is also effective when the teacher uses the proper reading strategies to help the child learn to read. An effective and successful reading strategy that can help facilitate the emergent reader's literacy process is the Mini Shared Reading strategy created by Dr. Barbara Flores at CSU, San Bernardino. As a first grade bilingual teacher, I have found this reading procedure to be effective in helping my struggling readers to achieve literacy.

Mini Shared Reading

Mini Shared Reading is a teaching approach used to facilitate and make visible the reading process to a small

group of children. It is used primarily with emergent readers. The Mini Shared Reading procedure is a blend of both Shared Reading and Guided Reading. It keeps the children engaged in the reading process while the teacher who is the mediator of this process, assesses and conducts mini lessons to strengthen each child's knowledge of the cueing systems and reading strategies. The teachers' role is important during this reading procedure because according to Diaz & Flores (1990), the teacher is the sociocultural mediator and is responsible for organizing the socioeducational context and deliberately bridging between the unknown to the known.

The Mini Shared Reading strategy is effective because it takes into account the student's lack of experience with literacy, the student's independent reading level, teacher experienced modeled reading, and social peer support through choral reading. This reading procedure is especially effective for children who are too afraid to begin the literacy process. It is also for children who although they have begun the reading process, are struggling to completely achieve it. The Mini Shared Reading strategy is especially effective when done in a small group setting. This way the teacher can evaluate each of the student's literacy strengths and weaknesses

and thereafter provide literacy instruction appropriate for each student.

In the following page is the model for the Mini Shared Reading (Flores, 1992) procedure which teachers can use with all of their students struggling or not. However, it is especially effective for the emergent and struggling reader.

Mini Shared Reading Procedure

1.) Introduce book with cover:

- The teacher selects a book that is at an appropriate level for the children, i.e., not to easy, but challenging.

2.) Read and Talk About Title:

- Teacher engages children by introducing the title (i.e, What's the book going to be about?)

3.) Connect Topic Of The Book With Prior Experiences:

- Next the teacher engages the children by connecting the topic of the book to their own experience.

4.) Discuss As Teacher Engages Kids In Picture Walk of the Book:

- Talking about the illustrations in the book is important preparation for when the text is Read Aloud by the teacher.

5.) Read Aloud Entire Book As Children Listen and Look:

- Next the teacher Reads Aloud the book as all the children watch as she/he says the words and sweeps her finger under the text.

6.) Children Echo Read After Teacher Reads Text Again:

- The second reading is now done by the teacher with the children ECHO READING after she reads each page. This mediated social interaction supports the children and provides them with rehearsal to engage in the act of reading the text again, but together without the Teacher unless they need the support.

7.) Choral Reading:

- The Third Reading of the Text is done by the children together. In this way the children support each other, i.e., if one doesn't know the other does. The teacher thus observes ho the children are engaging with the text.

8.) Revisit the Text:

- After Reading and Rereading the text, the
  Teacher will now conduct MINI LESSONS that make
  visible the cueing systems. Whatever patterns
  emerge from the text will guide the Teacher in
  mediational strategies and metalinguistic talk
  about the text.

9.) Collaboration:

- Next the follow up engagement includes guiding
  the children in co-constructing their own text
  but using the patterns that the original book
  used. The teacher then types these little books,
  the children illustrate them, and then share and
  read them.

10.) Independent Reading of Own text and Original text:

- Now the CHILDREN can read two, three, or four
  versions of the same patterned/predictable
  text/book

  (Flores, 1992)

CHAPTER FOUR

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AND DATA ANALYSIS

Mini Shared Reading as a Reading Strategy

According to Vygotsky, every child has the capability

of reaching his or her zone of proximal development

through the help of an adult or peers, in order to achieve

a higher level of developmental learning. Reading is just

one of the developmental learning factors that must be

achieved by all children. Literacy can be achieved

successfully if there is enough social interaction,

language acquisition and social support given in the

process.

In this study, this was accomplished by using the

Mini Shared Reading Strategy developed by Dr. Barbara

Flores at CSU, San Bernardino. This reading strategy was

used and taught to my five struggling readers by me, their

teacher. The Mini Shared Reading strategy is an effective

reading strategy that is used as a bridge to reach and

teach all the different reading strategies the children

need in order to become fluent independent readers. This

reading strategy allows the students to internalize how

the reading process should be conducted. This will allow

the students to practice it on their own, once they begin

reading independently. This mediated structure/process not only allows interaction between the teacher and the students, but it also allows the students to interact with one another by helping each other's reading process especially when choral reading is done. In choral reading, the children self correct and support one another's reading process and cueing systems. If they get stuck, the teacher, who is the mediator of this reading strategy will come in to mediate.

The Mini Shared Reading strategy was used with my five male struggling readers three times a week for approximately twenty-five to thirty minutes each session. This reading strategy was used with the five students for approximately six months, beginning July 2003 to December 2003.

Selection of Students

The Selection of the students for this study was based on; 1) previous academic history and literacy experience in kindergarten; 2) a recorded reading Running Record upon exiting kindergarten; and 3) first grade assessment of each of the five male students based on the teacher's personal observation of each student's reading strengths and weaknesses, and an official Running Record

documented at the first reporting period in September. The five male students involved in this study are all struggling readers based on the above criteria. These students are as follows: Alfonso, Cristian, José, Ricardo and Saúl.

Alfonso: According to Alfonso's kindergarten teacher, Alfonso was considered a top reader in the class. He recognized all the letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds. Upon exiting kindergarten in May 2003, his documented Running Record level was a 5.

Upon entering first grade in July, I noticed that Alfonso had not completely achieved letter and sound recognition, an important pre-requisite for Phonics instruction. Also upon conducting an informal reading test, it was noted that Alfonso did not have a concept of the cueing systems that would help him in his reading. It was also noted that Alfonso's official Running Record level in September was a 4 as opposed to the level 5 as stated by his kindergarten teacher.

Cristian: Cristian is classified as having a speech impediment. He is taken out of my classroom twice a week for half an hour for speech therapy. According to his speech therapist, he has trouble pronouncing his "r's" and "s's". By the end of kindergarten, Cristian was labeled as

an "at risk student". He was almost retained in kindergarten because of his low overall academic achievement especially in literacy. According to the kindergarten teacher, Cristian achieved some letter and sound recognition. His exiting kindergarten Running Record level was 2.

Upon entering first grade, I noticed that indeed Cristian had not achieved complete letter and sound recognition and had not as yet been introduced to Whole Language reading. After Phonemic Awareness instruction and some Whole Language instruction, his first Running Record level assessment in September was documented as a 3. This is two levels higher than before. However, it must be noted that Running Record levels 1, 2 and 3 texts are mostly read by the teacher with the child just reading one or two words in the whole book. This is not complete reading as yet.

José: José did not attend kindergarten at my school site. Therefore, previous academic history was limited. I do know however, that he had some achievement in letter and sound recognition. Based on my assumption and observation, I knew that he needed more Phonemic Awareness instruction and graphophonics instruction. After conducting Phonemic Awareness instruction,

graphophonemicinstruction and some Whole Language instruction, José reached a level 4 in reading at the first reporting period in September. He still needed more Whole Language instruction.

Ricardo: Ricardo had very poor letter and sound recognition in both kindergarten and upon entering first grade. By the end of kindergarten, Ricardo was reading at a level 2. In first grade it was noticed that he lacked knowledge of the cueing systems needed for successful reading. During the first weeks of first grade, Ricardo missed a lot of school due to some personal family problems. Because of this, he missed a lot of the Phonemic Awareness instruction that occurs during the first weeks of school for all the children. Eventually both Phonemic Awareness and graphophonics instruction was taught to him. Ricardo struggled with both but eventually gained enough competence in both. Afterwards, some Whole Language instruction was begun. His Running Record level during the first reporting period in September was documented as a level 4.

Saúl: According to Saul's kindergarten teacher, Saúl had more difficulty with sound recognition than letter recognition. By the end of kindergarten, Saúl had achieved some Phonemic Awareness and at the end of kindergarten,

Saúl had achieved reading at a level 2. In first grade, I observed that he still struggled in learning letter and especially sound correspondences. More Phonemic Awareness was conducted in first grade. After letter and sound recognition was finally accomplished, graphophonics instruction began. Saúl also struggled in this area for about a few weeks. When decoding syllables was finally accomplished, some Whole Language instruction was introduced and by the first reporting period in first grade, Saúl had achieved reading at a level 4.

Transcription of a Mini Shared Reading Procedure

The following is a transcription of a Mini Shared Reading procedure conducted by me, a first grade bilingual teacher with five male students: Alfonso, Cristian, José, Ricardo and Saúl These five male students are considered emergent readers as well as struggling readers. The Mini Shared Reading procedure was done in a small group setting. The five students were grouped according to their low reading levels as assessed by the San Bernardino School District Running Records. The book used for this reading procedure was ¿Qué pide mona? by Scholastic. The following transcription was selected by me the teacher to show how each step of the Mini Shared Reading procedure

was conducted with my students. A note to the reader: The (T) represents the teacher and the (A), (C), (J), (R), (S) represent each of the above mentioned students.

Introduce Book with Cover

      T: "El título de este libro es ¿Qué pide Mona?

Read and Talk about the Title

      T: Piensen en el título ¿Qué pide Mona? Miren el dibujo.

             ¿De que creen que se va a tratar este libro?

      R: Va pedir ayuda.

      J: Pide cosas.

      T: ¿Quién pide cosas?

      J: El chango.

      C: El mono.

      T: ¿La mona pide cosas?

    All: Sí

Connect Topic of the Book with Prior Experiences

      T: ¿Quién creen que es Mona?

      J: La changita.

      T: ¿Ustedes creen que la changita se llama Mona?

    All: Sí

      T: ¿Ustedes han visto una mona en su vida?

      R: Yo sí, en el "zoo".

      S: Yo sí

T: ¿Todos han hido al zoológico y han visto una
     mona?

All: Sí

T: ¿Las monas que han visto, se parecen a esta?

J: No son diferentes.

T: ¿Por qué son diferentes?

S: Unos son negros y otros cafés.

T: ¿Negros y cafés?

A: Yo creeo que hay monos blancos.

T: ¿De qué color es este mono en el libro?

All: café

T: ¿Y en el zoológico, que hacen los monos?

J: Comen

T: ¿Qué más hacen?

C: Juegan

S: Se razcan.

T: Sí. Se rascan ¿verdad?

A: Se suben a los árboles

T: ¿Y qué mas?

C: Se meten en el agua.

T: ¿Han visto una mona que tenga una bolsa como
     esta de el libro?

All: No

Discuss as Teacher Engages Kids in a Picture Walk
of the Book

T: Ahora vamos a ver los dibujos página por página.
     Vamos a empezar con la primer página. Miren el
     dibujo. ¿Qué esta pasando en esta página?

C: Se esta subiendo a un arbol.

T: ¿Y quién esta mirando a la mona?

R: El niño.

T: Miren a la mona. ¿En que creen que está pensando
     la mona?

All: En un platano.

T: También, ¿cómo se pueden llamar las platanos?

All: Bananas

T: Mirando a el dibujo, ¿qué creen que quiere Mona?

R: Bananas

T: ¿Y a quién le está pidiendo una banana?

J: A los niños.

T: ¿Dónde creen que están los niños?

C: Afuera en su yarda.

T: Piensen bien. ¿Dónde mirarían ustedes a una
     mona?

S: Afuera

C: En el "zoo".

T: Entonces, ¿dónde creen que están los niños?

All: En el zoológico

T: Ahora vamos a ver el siguiente dibujo. ¿Qué
     creen que está pasando aquí?

R: El chango le está dando una galleta.

T: ¿El chango le está dando una galleta?

J: No. La niña le va a dar una galleta al mono.

T: Miren la mano de la niña. ¿Eso es una galleta en
     su mano?

C: No. Es una banana.

J: No es un pepino.

T: ¿Se parece a un pepino?

All: Sí

T: ¿Pero en qué está pensando la mona?

All: En una banana

T: ¿Y la niña le está dando una banana?

All: No

T: Vamos a ver la siguiente página. ¿Qué está
     pasando aquí?

R: El niño le quiere dar galletas al mono.

J: Le está dando cacahuates.

T: ¿Los cacahuates también cómo se pueden llamar?
     (silence) También se llaman maní y en que está
     pensando la mona?

All: Bananas

T: ¿Le están dando bananas?

All: No

T: ¿Quién no le está dando bananas a la mona?

All: El niño.

T: Vamos a la siguiente página. Ahora, ¿en está

      página qué está pasando?

R: Hay un hilo.

T: ¿Quién le está dando un rollo de hilo a la mona?

R: La abuelita.

T: ¿La señora o la abuela?

All: La abuelita.

T: ¿Y la mona quiere el hilo?

All: No.

A: Quiere una banana.

T: ¿Y le está dando la abuelita una banana?

All: No

T: Mírenle la cara a la mona. ¿En que estará

      pensando la mona?

All: En la banana.

T: Miren lo que tiene la mona en su brazo.

R: Cookies

T: No fijense bien. Es una bolsa. ¿Qué tiene allí

      adentro de su bolsa?

J: Cacahuates

T: ¿Quién le dió el maní?

All: Los niños.

T: ¿Y qué más tiene en la bolsa?

J: El pepino.

T: El pepinito ¿verdad. ¿Qué está haciendo la mona
      con todas las cosas que le están dando?

C: Esta metiendo las cosas en su bolsa.

T: ¿Qué creen que va a pasar en la siguiente
      página?

R: Creeo que le van a dar su banana.

T: Okay. Ahora miren está página. ¿Qué está pasando
      en esta página?

S: Le dieron una banana.

T: ¿Quién le dió una banana?

R: La abuelita.

A: La niña.

S: La señora.

T: Miren el dibujo. ¿En qué esta pensando la
      señora?

R: En el hilo.

T: ¿Entonces qué quiere ella?

All: El hilo.

T: ¿Y dónde esta el hilo?

All: En la bolsa.

T: ¿Y que quiere la mona?

All: La banana.

T: ¿Y qué están haciendo la señora y la mona?

C: Están cambiando las cosas.

T: ¿Están intercambiando las cosas verdad?

All: Sí.

T: ¿Y en la última página qué pasó?

J: Se la está comiendo.

R: Se está comiendo su banana.

T: ¿Y le gusta su banana?

All: Sí

T: ¿Cómo saben? Miren la cara de la mona.

R: Está feliz.

T: ¿Y qué tiró en el pizo?

J: La bolsa.

A: Los cacahuates.

T: Y todas las cosas que no quizo ¿verdad?. Bueno,
     vamos a lo siguiente.

Read Aloud Entire Book As Children Listen and Look

T: Okay. Yo les voy a leer este libro y ustedes van
     a esuchar el libro cuando yo lo lea. Van a
     escuchar con sus oídos y van a mirar a mi dedo
     debajo de cada palabra.

106

**The teacher reads aloud the entire book as the children watch. Here the teacher takes advantage of the children's attention to model how a fluent reader should read and makes visible all the cueing systems needed for proper reading.

T: ¿Les gustó el cuento?

All: Sí.

R: A los changos les gusta la banana.

T: ¿Qué es lo que yo hice con mi dedo?

J: Leer.

T: Bueno uno no puede leer con su dedo pero el dedo te puede ayudar a leer bien. ¿Cómo puede uno leer con su dedo? ¿Que estaba haciendo yo con mi dedo?

S: Leyendo.

R: Apuntando.

T: Sí. Estaba leyendo mientras apuntaba a cada palabra. ¿Por qué es importante apuntar a cada palabra?

S: Porque si no apuntas a las palabras te vas a perder.

T: Excelente! Si no apuntas a las palabras, te puedes perder. Ustedes son muy inteligentes.

Children Echo Read After the Teacher Reads the
Text Again

T: Ahora yo voy a leer cada página del cuento
primero y ustedes la van a leer después de mi.
¿Entienden? ¿Está bien? Acuerden de poner su
dedo debajo de cada palabra cuando les toque a
ustedes a leer.

All: Sí

**The teacher reads aloud the text of each page as
the children echo read each page after the teacher.
The purpose of this is for the teacher to mediate the
reading process by modeling how a fluent reader
should read. The teacher is reading/modeling at the
potential. The teacher does this by pointing to each
word as she reads, corrects him/herself as he/she
reads and looks at the pictures before reading. This
is all done in front of the children as the children
watch and hear the teacher during the reading
session.

Choral Reading

T: Ahora ustedes van a leer el cuento solitos pero
al mismo tiempo juntos. Eso quiere decir que
ustedes van a tener su proprio libro y todos van
a ser responsables de leerlo con mucho cuidado

pero no lo están leyendo solitos porque todos

están leyendo el cuento juntos, al mismo tiempo.

**The children now read the story chorally. This

means that the children read the story text together

without the support of the teacher but of each other.

Choral reading decreases a child's fear of reading,

increases self esteem because the process of reading

is now real to them, and lastly, it supports each

others reading by listening to one another and

helping one another in the process. In other words,

if one child does not know a word, another child will

and that child can continue reading without feeling

bad.

Revisit the Text

T: ¿El libro se les hizo facil de leer?

All: Sí.

T: ¿Por qué estaba más facil de leer?

R: Porque las letras están chiquitas.

T: Yo noté que ustedes estaban poniendo su dedo

      debajo de cada palabra. Eso es excelente. Así no

      se pierden. Y yo noté que algunos de ustedes

      estaban corregiendose cuando decían una palabra

      mal o leían algo mal. Quiero que siempre se

acuerden de eso ¿Hay algunas palabras que
ustedes no entendieron?

All: No.

T: ¿Qué cosas deben hacer ustedes para leer bien?
        Por ejemplo, si no leyeron una palabra bien,
        ¿van a seguir leyendo?

All: No

R: Nos vamos a regresar al principio de la oración
        y la vamos a leer otra vez.

T: ¿Y que deben hacer cuando están leyendo?

S: Ponemos el dedo debajo de cada palabra.

T: Miren está palabra, "mona". ¿Cómo pueden ustedes
        leer esta palabra sin dificultad?

J: Es facil. Ya la he leeido muchas veces en otros
        cuentos.

T: Eso es cierto. Ya cuando has leído una palabra
        varias veces, ya no es dificil de leeerla
        ¿verdad? Pero que tal si nunca han visto esta
        palabra. ¿Qué pueden hacer para leerla con mas
        facilidad?

S: La quebramos en sílabas y despúes la leemos otra
        vez.

C: Podemos usar los sonidos para leerla.

T: Excelente. Sí. Pueden quebrar las palabras en
      sílabas como "mo" y después decir "na". Luego
      pones las dos sílabas juntas para decir "mona".
      También pueden leer la palabra con cada sonido
      de la palabra. Por ejemplo: /m/, /o/, /n/, /a/
      es "mona". ¿Cuál modo de deletrear una palabra
      es mas facil?

All: Quebrar las palabras en sílabas.

T: Sí y cuando ustedes esten acostumbrados a ver y
      a leer la misma palabra varias veces en
      diferentes cuentos, la van a poder leer sin
      deletrear. Por eso, deben de leer mucho en su
      tiempo libre ¿Ustedes creen que los dibujos les
      ayuda a leer?

All: Sí.

S: Porque si no sabemos leer, el foto nos ayuda.

T: Si no saben una palabra o no entienden lo que
      leyeron, miren el dibujo para que les ayude a
      leer una palabra. El dibujo también les puede
      ayudar a entender lo que leyeron. Por ejemplo,
      en esta página, donde esta el pepino, si tú no
      supieras como leer la palabra pepino, nomás
      tendrías que ver el dibujo y sabrías que allí
      dice pepino. Ustedes leyeron muy excelente.

111

Estoy contenta con ustedes. ¿De qué se trató este cuento?

J: Yo sé. Yo sé.

T: Sí yo sé que tú sabes, pero quiero que uno de los otros muchachos me diga primero ¿okay? ¿Uno de ustedes otros me puede decir de qué se trató este cuento?

R: De la mona.

C: Quiere cacahuates.

T: ¿Cómo se llaman los cacahuates en este cuento?

A: maní.

T: ¿Dónde está la mona?

R: En el zoológico y quiere maní y los niños no se lo dan.

T: ¿La abuela le da una babana a la mona?

S: No. Ella la da hilo.

T: ¿Aquí en el cuento dice hilo?

C: No. Es lana pero la mona quiere banana.

T: Cómo saben ustedes que la mona quiere una banana?

C: Porqué la mona está pensando en bananas en el dibujo.

T: Muy bien. ¿Ya ven como los dibujos les puede

    ayudar a leer y a entender lo que está leyendo?

    Alfonso ¿qué pasó al último del cuento?

A: La mamá de los niños le da una banana y la mona

    esta feliz.

T: José. ¿De que se trató el cuento?

J: La mona quiere una banana, pero los niños no se

    la dieron. Ni tampoco la abuela. Nomás se la dio

    la mamá de los niños y la mona estaba feliz y

    todo lo que le dieron lo tenía aguardado en una

    bolsa y la mamá de los niños le pidió la lana

    que le dio la abuela de los niños.

T: Hicieron un buen trabajo. Es muy importante

    acordarse de lo que leyeron porque si no

    entendieron lo que leyeron, entonces realmente

    no leyeron. No les sirve leer bien si no

    entendieron lo que leyeron. Leer es entender.

    Siempre acuérdense de eso.

** In revisiting the text, the teacher can conduct
mini lessons in areas of literacy the children were
weak in such as in graphophonics, syntactic, and
semantic, cueing systems, as well as reading
comprehension.

Reflection of Teacher Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the Mini Shared Reading
Procedure depends greatly on the teacher conducting it.
The teacher is responsible for turning an emergent
reader's first literacy experience into a lasting literacy
experience that will help the child become a fluent
reader.

The teacher's role in this procedure is that of a
mediator. This means that the teacher is responsible for
helping the emergent reader become a fluent reader by
mediating the reading strategies that child will need in
order to read successfully. The teacher is also
responsible in helping the child get through their first
literacy experience comfortably and the teacher is also
responsible in teaching the students to use all of the
cueing systems that are needed for successful reading.

In order for the Mini Shared Reading Procedure to be
effective, the teacher must first be aware of each child's
literacy history/background and reading behavior. Second,
the teacher must know how to properly conduct the Mini
Shared Reading Procedure. In order for this to happen, a
critical reflection after each Mini Shared Reading session
with the children must be analyzed by the teacher. This
will help the teacher to do the Mini Shared Reading

procedure more effectively the next time. I am no
exception to this rule. In the following paragraph is a
critical reflection of how I conducted the Mini Shared
Reading procedure and how I believe it could have been
done better.

The first and most important factor before
introducing or beginning the Mini Shared Reading procedure
is obtaining each student's literacy history or literacy
background from the child's previous teacher. Also looking
over each student's previous grade assessment packets
helped me in finding what level of reading the children
had achieved in kindergarten. Personal observation of each
child's reading skills or lack of reading skills on a one
to one reading basis, allowed me to evaluate what reading
strategies the children lacked, needed or needed
improvement in.

After revisiting the transcription of my own Mini
Shared Reading session, I realized that I began the Mini
Shared Reading session without having told the children
what we were going to do first. Since this was the
children's first literacy experience, I should have
informed them of the steps. This would have lessened or at
least put the children's fear aside. I am now wondering if

this fear had to do with Alfonso not overly participating in the session.

While I was conducting the reading session, I did not realize that Alfonso had not actively participated in the reading session, but after reviewing the recorded transcript of the session, I did. I have learned that for the next Mini Shared Reading session, I will be more aware of how much each of the student's are participating. If one or more of the children are not actively participating, I will make sure they do so by asking that child or those children more one on one questions that are related to the book or to the text of the story. Constant praise for their participation will also be given.

I believe that one of the most successful parts of the Mini Shared Reading session was the [Picture Walk] through of the entire book. Children love looking at the pictures of the books they read. This is great because it is well known that the pictures of the book help children in their reading quest. It is even more effective when the children see the pictures of each page of the book before reading it. In the [Picture walk] the children are able to tell what they believe is happening in the picture. Furthermore, the children can also make predictions about what is happening in each picture or in the next. Once the

children read the book, they can automatically connect what they saw or predicted about the picture to the text they are reading. This experience is valuable in making visible how the text and the illustrations correspond. This, in turn, embeds the children's success in reading effectively.

I made sure the students understood the importance of looking at a picture before they read. I did this by first asking them why they believed it was important to look at the picture of a page before reading it. In this session, the children knew why. They knew that it would help them read better and they knew that it would help them in reading a word they could not decode.

During the [Echo Reading], the teacher must take control of the reading session. That is, the teacher must be clear on how he or she wants the children to read. This is done by the teacher modeling the reading process. The process is as follows: the teacher reads the page or the text first and the children read it after the teacher. It is assured that how the teacher reads the text is how the children will read the text. Therefore, the teacher who is the mediator and the model of the reading process, must make sure that the text is read clearly, slowly, and fluently just as an expert reader would. This is very

beneficial to speech problem students. Also all the cueing

systems the children must learn, have to be taught here

because as the teacher is reading, the children are

watching very carefully what is being done by the teacher.

This is very evident when the teacher is pointing to each

word as the text is being read. I noticed that my students

pointed to the words as they read. This was not only

because I told them how important it was to do so, but

because I modeled how I wanted their reading to be done.

My favorite part of the Mini Shared Reading session

is the [choral reading] because I see and hear my

struggling students read and this makes me love my job. It

not only makes me happy, it makes my struggling readers

happy. The student's self esteem increases during this

part of the session because not only did the teacher model

the reading for them first but now they realize that the

actual reading is coming from them and that they are doing

a good job at it. There is no fear in reading the text

because they are all reading the text together. The

children although not told by the teacher, automatically

know they can depend on their reading peers to help them

get through the book.

During [choral reading], the teacher must be

observing each child's reading. This will let the teacher

know what cueing systems the children are using or not using in helping them read. This way when the teacher revisits the text, he or she can make visible all the cueing systems the students lacked or needed work in. The teacher must take advantage of revisiting the text by creating Mini lessons on graphophonics and syntactic systems, comprehension skills or any other reading strategy the teacher feels the children need work in.

The Mini Shared Reading procedure is not only effective in itself, but it is even more effective when the teacher evaluates, examines, reflects and analyses how much better the Mini Shared Reading procedure can be by learning from the mistakes done in previous sessions. I know I have succeeded because my struggling students are now on their way to becoming expert readers. You owe it to yourself as a teacher to become good at what you do. Even more, you owe it to those emergent or struggling readers who depend on you to teach them to read.

Analysis of Data

After using the Mini Shared Reading Procedure for approximately six months, I have noticed a considerable growth in all of the student's reading as assessed by the San Bernardino School District Running Record reading

levels. The objective of the Running Record assessment is
to assess how fluent a child can read a text/book with as
few mistakes as possible. The data obtained for this study
was collected through the children's Running Record levels
taken three different times during the 2003 school year.
The collection of the Running Record data was obtained
first in kindergarten at the end of May of 2003. The
second data collected was in September 2003 and the third
data collected was in December of 2003.

I am a teacher who believes greatly in the power of
literacy. It is this vision of a literate society that
guides me in helping my students to read. I am very
impressed with all of my five student's growth in reading.
I attribute this success to all of the five struggling
readers who believed that one day they would read and in
my dedication to never give up on them.

According to the Running Record level chart (see
Table 1), my five students have increased their reading
levels by as much as eleven to fourteen levels as is
evident with José and Ricardo. In July, José came into my
classroom with very little letter and sound recognition.
Because he had never read before, I placed him as reading
in a level 1 in September. Approximately two months after
he entered my first grade classroom, José was able to

achieve reading at a level 4. Two months after this recorded Running Record, José achieved reading at a level 15 with complete comprehension. This is extraordinary!

As I stated before, Ricardo came late into my classroom due to personal family problems. Ricardo like José had absolutely no letter sound recognition and therefore was unable to decode words much less read. At the end of May as a kindergartner, he was reading at a level 3, a text that is mostly read by the teacher with the student just reading a few patterned words. By September, he was able to read at a level 4, and in December, he read at a level 18 with complete comprehension. Ricardo jumped fourteen levels in about six months.

The students that struggled the most to achieve literacy competence, were Cristian, Saúl and Alfonso. These three students came from kindergarten either lacking complete letter and sound recognition or lacking letter or sound recognition. Alfonso who had previously been classified as reading at a level 5 was actually no where close to that level. Alfonso struggled with Phonemic Awareness and Phonics instruction and was not able to read as of yet. However, due to the fact that it was recorded as such in kindergarten, that Running Record level had to

be recorded in the Progressive Running Record Levels chart. In September though, Alfonso finally achieved reading at a level 4 and in December he achieved reading at a level 15 with complete comprehension. His level of increase was eleven levels and still growing. This is incredible for a student who struggled with the whole concept of literacy.

Saul's Progressive Running Record Level chart shows that in May while in kindergarten, he was reading at a level 2. One must remember that the text in a level 2 book is extremely easy because the child only reads one or two patterned words. Therefore, this should not be considered true reading yet. In September Saul increased two levels in the first two months of first grade and in December, he increased five levels. Up to this date, he is now reading at a level 9.

The student that impressed me the most was Cristian. This is a child who was almost retained in kindergarten due to his low academic ability in all the areas of the curriculum, especially in Phonemic Awareness. Not only that, he has a speech problem which in some cases can prevent or hinder a child from reading. This is true of Cristian. However, with the Mini Shared Reading procedure, especially during Écho Reading, Cristian can hear me model

how each word is read and pronounced. This deliberate mediation facilitates and connects oral language with the written language. I believe that this has helped Cristian in achieving the reading level that he is currently reading in. Like my other four students, Cristian also lacked both letter and sound recognition. Despite this, he managed to achieve reading at a level 2 at the end of May in kindergarten. Although Cristian struggled with Phonemic Awareness and Phonics instruction at the beginning of first grade, he achieved a reading level of 4 in September and he achieved a reading level of 11/12 in December. Cristian had a growth of seven to eight levels in a few months.

Without a doubt, each student's progress is more than noteworthy. It demonstrates how a knowledgeable teacher deliberately organized teaching to the potential. Even though these five male students were considered "at risk", I did not teach to their developmental level. On the contrary, I taught to their potential as Vygotsky (1978) advocate (Díaz & Flores, 2001).

Table 1. Progressive Running Record Levels 2003
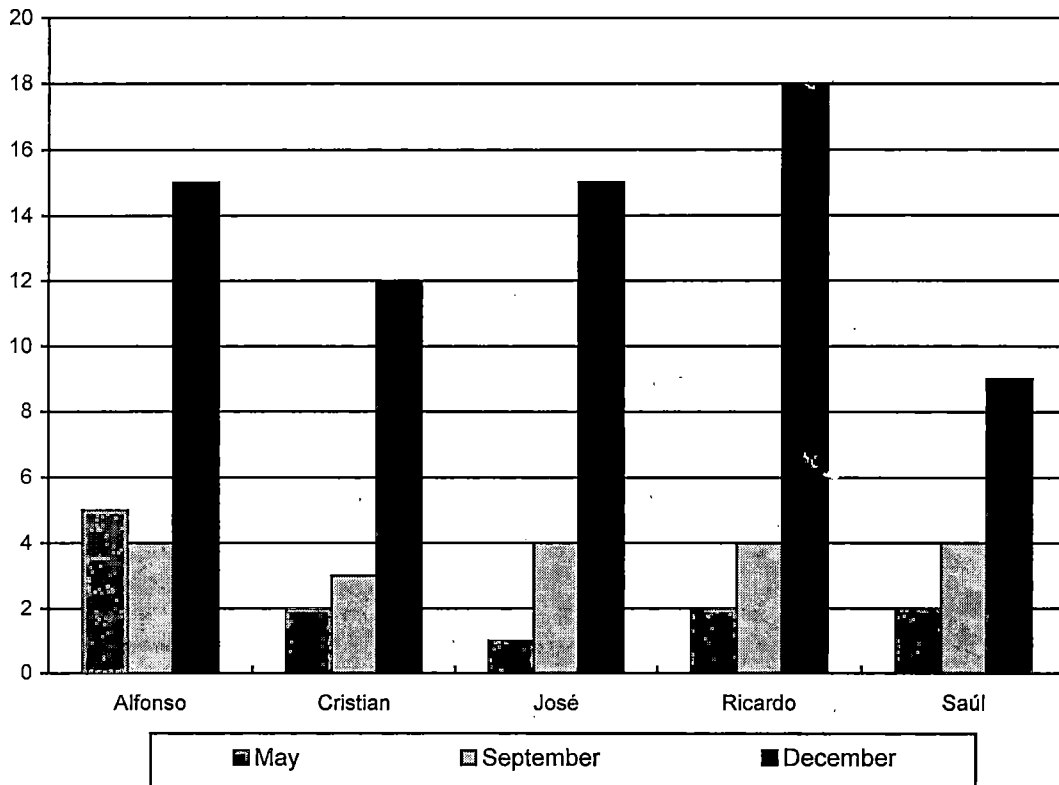
Conclusion of Data Analysis

Upon exiting kindergarten in May, most of the five

male students were either reading at a very low level or

not reading at all like in Jose's case. In July, Phonemic

Awareness instruction was begun. Once the children

acquired letter and sound recognition, Phonics instruction

was begun. Once competent in both, whole Language

instruction was introduced and the Mini Shared Reading

procedure was implemented. Those children who did not

acquire either Phonemic Awareness or Phonics instruction,

had continued instruction in those areas until competence was achieved.

If one looks at table 1 during the second running record levels in September, one can see that the student's running record levels only increased about two levels. This is because the children are still learning the decoding process and applying it to the Whole Language process. In time and with increased reading sessions, the children's decoding skills are more applied and their reading becomes more fluent as noted during the recorded running record levels in December. This is evident especially with Jose, Ricardo, and Alfonso whose increase in reading levels is amazing.

Both Cristian and Saul did not have such a high increase in reading levels, but none the less their reading levels were impressive. Some children learn to read more quickly than others. Eventually, with good instruction and dedication in the teacher's part, all the children will acquire the process of reading. In a few more months, Cristian and Saul will achieve reading at a level 15 or higher, a level stipulated by the San Bernardino School District for passing to second grade. The increase of levels can be achieved if the teacher is knowledgeable in teaching children to read. This knowledge

includes implementing proper and effective reading strategies that will help children read. An effective strategy is implementing the Mini Shared Reading procedure into a well balanced literacy program.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The heart and soul of a child's education is
literacy. Literacy is an important factor in ensuring that
"all" our children have a successful education for the
rest of their lives. This is especially true for
non-English speaking children who depend on their native
language to learn the curriculum. Therefore, it is only
right to teach these children to read in their native
language.

The process of teaching literacy to children depends
heavily on the teacher's beliefs of how teaching literacy
should be done. Teachers always question whether Phonics
instruction or Whole Language instruction is the best and
only way of teaching literacy. Teachers should not
question whether one works better than the other. The one
question teachers should be asking is "Can these two
aspects of reading instruction help my students to read?"
The answer is yes. Both Phonics instruction and Whole
Language instruction can and will help a child to read. By
implementing a well-balanced literacy program into the

reading curriculum, the teacher can be assured that reading attainment will be achieved by "all" the students.

Reading is a life long process that sometimes begins long before a child enters school. Reading to a child before that child can read independently is an important factor in preparing children for their first literacy experience. Once in school, reading to children for pleasure does not stop. Teachers play an important role in installing a love of reading in children. In school, reading to children for pleasure includes doing Read Alouds and Shared Reading done by the teacher. Both are a part of literacy that should always be included in the classroom curriculum especially when children are young.

It is not always easy to teach children to read. This is because children learn to read differently than others. In other words, some children can be taught the process of reading and they eventually become fluent readers in no time. Other children however will struggle to read.

There are a number of reasons why struggling children lag behind in reading than their classmates. One reason could be that some students have no concept of how letters and sounds work together to make words. Others have speech problems that can impede them from hearing themselves read correctly therefore obstructing their literacy attainment.

Still others cannot grasp the cueing systems that are being taught to them. This is not to say that these children will never read. What I am saying is that teachers will always have struggling readers. However it is the teachers responsibility to learn and observe these struggling children's reading strengths and weaknesses, and then implement differentiated reading strategies that will reach each of these struggling readers in one way or another. An effective way of achieving this, is through Guided Reading.

A mediated reading strategy that is effective with all types of readers especially with struggling readers, is the Mini Shared Reading strategy. Mini Shared Reading is effective because both the teacher and the students work together to achieve literacy attainment. This can be justified by seeing the Progressive Running Record Levels Table 1. All of the five struggling readers in my classroom increased their reading levels. Some by as much as fourteen levels in just a few short months and these students will continue to increase their reading levels by the end of the school year

By the end of first grade, all the children must achieve reading at a level 15 to progress into second grade. As of December, six of my students are now reading

at a level 20, six are reading at a level 18, and three are reading at a level 15. Undoubtedly, by years end, all of my twenty students will be at or beyond the first grade reading level expectation.

Conclusion

Not every teacher is capable of teaching literacy, but for those few who choose to try or who know they can as I do, must consider several factors before implementing a reading program. Such factors include teacher expertise in the area of literacy attainment, the child's adaptation to their first literacy experience, appropriate and available reading materials at the school site, and finally, taking into consideration the child's native language as a means to obtain literacy success.

Too many non-English speaking students are being forced to learn to read in a language that is not their own. A non-English speaking child who is forced to learn to read in a language that child does not understand, is not only cruel, but ineffective. This is due to the fact that the non-English speaking child will not understand what he or she is reading and some or all of the cueing systems taught by the teacher will be completely misunderstood or lost because of the language barrier.

However, a child who is taught to read in their native language will not only achieve literacy but bi-literacy. This is because all of the cueing systems taught to the students in their native language will automatically transfer over to the English language. Moreover, these non-English speaking student's self-esteem will never be hurt or damaged.

As a child I loved to read and I loved being read to. This pleasurable reading continued into adulthood. Now as a teacher, I know how important reading attainment is, especially for understanding all the classroom curriculum. Literacy, has become my passion and when I teach literacy, I teach it from my heart. My heart fills with joy when I see and hear a struggling reader read for the first time. It is my deepest hope that all of America will become a literate society. This depends greatly on all our current teachers and future teachers who I hope will share my passion for literacy.

Recommendations

Teaching literacy to children is not easy. It is one of the most difficult areas to teach in the kindergarten and first grade curriculum. However, it is not impossible to teach. Undoubtedly, in every classroom there will be

students who will achieve learning how to read without any problems. Unfortunately, as one has high academic students, one also has "at risk" or "low achieving" students. These are the students who have a difficult time learning many of the areas of the classroom curriculum especially literacy.

Therefore, it is my recommendation that teachers always see the potential in any "at risk" students. There is no child who cannot learn so long as there is a teacher who is willing to teach beyond their limits. With the proper guidance, faith, hope and pedagogical knowledge from the teacher, a struggling student can and will learn the curriculum especially reading. Without literacy proficiency, these students will surely fail in all present and future grade curriculums. A good teacher would never give up on any student. For in each child there is a seed of accomplishment that only a good teacher can water. My five male students are an apt example. At the beginning of kindergarten, they were considered "low" and "at risk" and by the end of kindergarten no one thought they were ever going to read. These are students who probably no teacher would want in their classroom and who would probably never consider worth teaching. I did and now

these once labeled "at risk" students are on their way to becoming skilled, proficient readers and learners.

Another recommendation for teaching literacy to any child, is for the teacher to frequently evaluate or assess each student's reading strengths and weaknesses as well as any noticeable reading behaviors that may impact the way a child will learn to read. This begins by reviewing any assessments done by the previous teacher. In my case this was kindergarten. It also helps if you and the previous teacher exchange any anecdotal notes taken when teaching literacy to a particular child. Secondly, it is important for the first grade teacher to do his/her own literacy assessments and evaluations on each of the students. This is important because the previous teacher may have incorrectly assessed a child as being either too high or too low in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, or Whole Language reading. A good example of this is Alfonso whose kindergarten teacher assessed him at reading at level 5, when in reality after being assessed by me, was at a level 4.

When teaching literacy, the teacher should include small group instruction. This gives the teacher the opportunity to assess how each child is reading or what reading behaviors are missing that may affect the child to

not achieve literacy proficiency. For example: Is the child reading incorrectly and still continuing to read without correcting him/herself? Is the child looking at the pictures as a support system to help him/her read? Is the child placing his/her finger under each word? And is the child understanding what he/she is reading? These are just a few of the reading behaviors that must be noted and assessed by the teacher. Thereafter, depending on what the teacher observed, mini lessons can be taught to help the child successfully read.

Once a child has achieved reading proficiency, it is important to continue having the student read. This will increase the child's reading proficiency and fluency but above all, it will increase the child's self esteem. Therefore, it is also my recommendation that teachers include the student's parents in their child's literacy attainment. This can be done by having the child read to mom and dad or to mom or dad every night for about 15-20 minutes. The parents are a great asset in helping their child to begin to read or to continue to read. Parents are teachers without classrooms but who share the same passion as their child's teacher to help their child to read. Therefore, teachers should not hesitate to ask parents for their help.

My last recommendation is that teachers not ask if phonics or whole language instruction is the best way to teach reading attainment. What they should ask is how can I teach both in a balanced way.

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