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Bilingual Students and Family Literacy

Laura Green

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Bilingual Students and Family Literacy

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INTRODUCTION

Bilingual students face many challenges in our schools today. I have seen some of those challenges within my own family, as well as, with other students. The truth is there are many factors that contribute to the challenges that bilingual students face. It isn’t just the language barrier that is challenging for bilingual students. The students are coming from many different cultures and from many different socioeconomic backgrounds. They are then going to schools that are unequipped to meet their needs as students. Family literacy is an important key in the success of these students, because the groundwork that is planted at home lays the foundation for students to grow from and enter our classrooms. The foundation is an important part of education, providing for the development of learning how to read and write. As educators, we need to find a way to reach out to the parents and families of these bilingual students. If we can raise both the awareness of literacy among families and the awareness of the funds of knowledge that the families can provide for the students, we can increase bilingual students’ success in school.

That is why I decided to do a case study on a young bilingual girl and her family. I met the eight year old and her family five months ago. The family had only been in the United States about two years. She is eight years old, and her two siblings are twelve and fifteen. I will study their reading patterns, obstacles, and overall family literacy and involvement. I believe that many of the issues that I would like to examine can be found within this family.

Many students have some form of barriers in their learning and in their education. However, as educators we strive to meet those needs. Students, who are struggling readers, often receive extra aid. If a family is low income, we have designed programs like Head Start. However, what have we done to foster or help the bilingual families?
I have seen in my own family and in the families of other bilingual students that their needs are often not met. As a result, the barriers between the bilingual families and schools increase. This makes learning and success that much more of a challenge for these bilingual students, many of whom want to succeed. Through my studies, I would like to investigate these issues and present some insight into a bilingual student’s family, as well as consider possible solutions and needs that we as educators need to accomplish.
RATIONALE

The purpose of this thesis is to help other people, including educators, become aware of the growing problems bilingual students and their families face in the United States. The challenges bilingual students and their families face, as well as the challenges teachers encounter while working with them are not going to disappear. In fact, they are only increasing. In 2000, 31.1 million of the population was foreign-born. The census-bureau showed this to be an increase of 57% since 1990 (Drucker, 2003). If we were aware of this incredible growth in our multicultural society fourteen years ago, how is it that we have yet to make enough accommodations and changes to fit the needs of our multicultural students and families? As a bilingual student myself, I found it very discouraging when I read an article in The Reading Teacher by Drucker (2003). He reported that a National Center for Education Statistics surveyed over 3 million teachers in the United States. Of those teachers, 41% of them reported teaching LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students; only 12.5% of that 41% had received eight or more hours of training.

I think that these findings are frightening and a sad display of our educational system today. These students are here in our country; they are a part of who we are. Yet, we as educators are failing the students’ needs. Instead, we are seeing these students placed in special education programs or put aside (IRA Position, May 2003). I think that it is a crime to these students, their families, and the future of this country. We need to first educate ourselves as educators. I agree with other educators who state that there is a need for more studies on how to meet the needs of these students (Drucker, 2003; Hammer, Miccio, and Wagstaff 2003). However, until such time, we need to make accommodations, so that we can help in any way that we can. As educators, we encourage family literacy and reading in the homes. Why should that emphasis be any different
for the bilingual students? As educators, we need to find ways to reach these families and bring literacy to all students and their families.

In my case study, I hope to gain new insight into the issues bilingual students face. The girl whom I will study is eight and left the third grade with a first grade reading level. Both of her older siblings are in ESP classes and struggling in many of their core classes, due to many of the language barriers they face. The two parents have little, if any communication, with the schools, because neither of the parents speaks fluent English. I hope to discover through their eyes what they are experiencing and going through while dealing with the education of their children. These issues are not going to disappear; they are growing everywhere. I hope to gain the knowledge and understanding of what needs to be done to improve the future of education and literacy learning for all students in the United States.
In the United States today we have been experiencing a wave of migration nationally that is unparalleled (Hawkins, 2004). According to Hawkins (2004), this didn’t occur over night. There has been a steady increase of migration over the last thirty years. As stated by Hammer et al., (2003) and according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2001), Spanish speakers make up the largest single language minority in the United States today. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), Spanish is the second most spoken language next to English. According to Endo and Miller (2004), there are at least 3.5 million LEP (Limited in English Proficiency) children enrolled in schools in the United States.

However, Hammer et al. (2003) state that the statistics suggest children whose first language is Spanish are at a higher risk for poor literacy results in United States schools. Few investigations or studies have examined the home literacy practices, the literacy development of Hispanic families, and the literacy results of school-age bilingual children (Hammer et al., 2003; Denny, English, Gerber, Leafstedt, & Ruz, 2001). For these reasons, the authors feel that we need to significantly improve our understanding of the essential factors that influence the literacy development of bilingual children (Hammer, et al., 2003).

**Challenges for Bilingual Students**

There is a great deal to examine in the literacy of bilingual students. The bilingual students themselves are going through some incredible challenges. According to Cheung and Slavin (2004), English language learners are one of the fastest growing populations in the United States. In fact, they report that such measures as abolishing or limiting native language instruction has taken place in some states. There are advocates in favor of native or bilingual
instruction, who argue that schools need to and must teach reading in the student’s native language first. Cheung and Slavin (2004) also report that these advocates feel that it is only after the student is proficient in their first language and after they have developed a proficiency in spoken English that he/she can be in a position to be transitioned into an English-only reading instruction program. In a bilingual instruction program, ELL (English Language Learners) students are taught to read in their first or native language and in English at different times of the day. These advocates feel that both the ELL students and English speaking students will benefit from this instruction because both will learn to read in Spanish and English languages (Cheung & Slavin, 2004).

However, there are opponents of the bilingual instruction program. In the same report, Cheung and Slavin (2004) state that opponents argue that delaying reading instruction in English will also delay productivity of reading instruction as a whole. Their position is that an English-only instruction program, with supports such as vocabulary instruction and reinforcements, is a far more effective approach to literacy for all students, including bilingual students. Having stated that, researchers without fail have found that balancing bilingual strategies assist English literacy for all students (Slavin & Cheung, 2004).

**Language Shock for Bilingual Students**

When discussing difficulties or challenges that bilingual students and families face, it is important to understand language shock. Endo and Miller (2004), refer to language shock as any anxiety that an immigrant may experience or go through when first entering a community where he/she does not speak, or may not be proficient in, the dominant or preferred language of that given community. The specific anxiety, which is created by the language shock, often creates greater difficulty in many aspects. Students trying to learn a new language may have difficulty in
performing well academically; let alone communicating in a social aspect. Endo and Miller (2004) further state that many of these students are caught in a conflict. At home, they are expected to speak in their native or first language. But, at school, they are expected to speak English. There is a great amount of pressure placed on these bilingual students. Learners of new languages are actually more likely to be successful if they are, instead, encouraged to embrace their own culture and share it with others as they learn the new language (Miller & Endo, 2004).

**Literacy at Home**

The IRA president Lesley Mandel Morrow addressed family literacy in an article found in *Reading Today* (Dec 2003/Jan2004). In her message, Morrow stated that the success of the school literacy program often depends on the home literacy environment. She emphasizes that it is very important for schools and teachers to involve parents in their children’s literacy within the school. She further stated that it is important to distribute information about how parents can help and how they can be involved. In some cases this may mean translating information into other languages so that all multilingual families can participate. Osterling, Violand-Sanchez, and von Vacano (1999) pointed out that many immigrant families are willing to participate and become active in their child’s education, but many times their efforts are not acknowledged or recognized in an English-only environment.

In an investigation that used data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Ortiz (1986) found that the parents’ education and how often parents read themselves were important links to the achievement of Hispanic students and African American children. Hammer et al. (2003) also emphasize that parents are their children’s first teachers.

In a national survey, the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2002) found that 64% of white families read to their children, as opposed to only 42% of
Hispanic families (Hammer et al., 2003). The authors further stated that when parents demonstrate that they value literacy by reading at home, it encourages their children to read as well.

Overall, all children bring a range of home literacy experiences and English literacy abilities to the classroom, regardless of ethnicity. Instead of judging the home literacy experiences, Hammer et al. suggest that teachers need to enhance and build on their students’ previous literacy experiences. They further encourage teachers to learn about students’ cultures and linguistic backgrounds, making their heritage an asset.

**Teacher Preparation**

Another growing problem with bilingual students and literacy development is the lack of teacher preparation or training. As previously stated by Drucker (2003), only 12.5% of teachers who work with LEP students have received 8 or more hours of training in working with bilingual students. What is also alarming is that within many high poverty schools, there is a high concentration of minority children. According to a position statement from the IRA (2003), many schools unfortunately have staffs, who are uncertified to deliver reading instruction. The position statement further stated that these circumstances are compacted because many paraprofessionals, special reading teachers, and special education teachers do not have the sufficient preparation for teaching reading. Hawkins (2004) states that current data indicates that there is a shortage of teachers, across the United States, who are qualified or trained in how to instruct LEP students.

To add to the lack of training that many schools have in working with bilingual students, many families do not speak English and are therefore unable to assist their own children in the ways that the school may be suggesting (*Reading Today*, Dec2003/Jan2004). Bronwyn and
Coltrane (2003) discuss how there are many teachers who are not provided with specialized training on how to meet the needs of students who are ELL. They further state that others may never have had any prior experience in teaching young students from culturally or multilingual diverse backgrounds. The IRA position statement (2003), stresses that the experiences minority children have had are often unrecognized in school settings. It further stated that what some teachers interpret as lack of achievement with minority children may really be different cultural pre-literacy experiences.

Endo and Miller (2004) discussed how laws today state that LEP students must be at a “proficient” level in English within 3 years. According to a foreword, by our president, George W. Bush, under Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act, “LEP students need to master English as quickly as possible. To accomplish this goal, states and school districts will be held accountable for making annual increases in English proficiency from the previous year.” Endo and Miller (2004) further stated that language research tells us that LEP students need 5 to 7 years in a language program to reach academic proficiency. According to Drucker (2003), ELL students must gain more language proficiency than a native English speaking student each year in order to catch up, or close the gap between native English speakers and ELL students. To add to this injury, Osterling, Sanchez, and von Vacano (1999) report that many schools, teachers, and administrators feel that immigrant families cannot offer the literacy support required for academic success.
Home Literacy Study

In their study, Hammer, et al. (2003) examined the relationship between bilingual preschoolers’ early literacy outcomes and their home literacy experiences. The study included 43 Puerto Rican mother-child pairs who were all recruited from Head Start programs in Pennsylvania. The 43 pairs were divided into two groups. Group One consisted of those children who learned English and Spanish simultaneously from birth (28 of the 43) and Group Two consisted of those children who learned Spanish from birth and then English from Head Start (15 of the 43).

Findings of the Study

The findings suggest that the language that was spoken at home differed between the two groups. In Group One, 90% of the mothers, reported that the adults spoke mostly Spanish at home. However, in Group Two, only 26% reported speaking only Spanish or more Spanish than English at home. Mothers from Group Two read to their children two to four times a week, whereas Group One mothers only read to the children approximately once a week. There was also a great difference found in the mothers’ desire for their children to achieve in the homes. Mothers from Group Two often taught their children pre-academic concepts, such as letter recognition and/or number recognition. The authors noted that this difference may be attributed to the fact that half of the mothers from Group Two were born in the United States, whereas only 7% of Group One mothers were born in the United States. The mothers who were born in the United States may have been more aware or familiar with school procedures and they seemed to understand what children are supposed to know before entering school.

Interestingly, the findings suggest that emergent literacy did not differ between the children in the two groups by the middle of their first year at Head Start. Even though 78% of
the Group Two mothers read to their children primarily, or only in English, only 28% of Group One mothers reported reading primarily in English. Nevertheless, the findings did not show literacy ability differences between the two groups midway through the school year.

This finding suggests that exposure to books in any language is suitable for helping children learn early literacy concepts. Regardless of the language used in the home, exposure to books in the home prior to school was of primary importance.

**Possible Factors**

According to the authors, many factors may have contributed to the differences in pre-literacy experiences between the two groups. It must be noted that Group One mothers may have had difficulty accessing literacy materials. There may also have been fewer opportunities for Spanish-speaking mothers to access written material in Spanish, because the material is limited in the United States. Another factor to consider is the knowledge that Group Two mothers may have been aware of as a result of being born in the United States and attending schools in America. Bilingual students who come from low-income backgrounds enter elementary school with a large range of home literacy experiences and English literacy abilities. The students’ family literacy background often influences their literacy performance in the school. Overall, the findings of the study indicate that there is not enough information known about how young children acquire two languages or what effects bilingualism has on emerging literacy.
Reading and Writing Strategies

Reading Strategies

There are many strategies that can be used to support reading with a classroom. Creating a classroom community that will provide as much language opportunity as possible for both first and second language learners is important (Tompkins, 2004). Providing time for students to experience written language independently and within the class is essential in reading instruction, as well as language acquisition.

Shared Reading. Using a variety of supports during reading instruction can provide and enhance the learning that takes place in the classroom. One strategy used often by teachers is shared reading. Shared reading occurs when students participate in reading out of a big book or enlarged text that is guided by the teacher, which can be very useful for bilingual students (Allington & Cunningham, 1999; Tompkins, 2004). It is during shared reading that a teacher is able to model reading strategies and/or present new concepts or strategies for the students to practice. Shared reading should take place in a gathering area where all students can gather around together.

Modeled Reading. An important strategy to use is called modeled reading. According to Tompkins (2004), teachers can provide the greatest amount of support while they are modeling how proficient readers read while the students are observing. Tompkins (2004) continues by stating that while teachers are reading aloud to students, they are modeling to students. The teacher can read aloud with expression and talk about the various reading strategies that he/she uses while they are reading. Through modeling, teachers can demonstrate how to use reading strategies and develop fluency.
Guided-Reading. A popular and commonly used reading instructional strategy is guided-reading. With guided-reading, the level of the student is determined by running records conducted by the teacher. With this approach, the student can have the opportunity to develop as an individual reader. The teacher will get together with a small group of 4 to 6 students with similar needs. As the students’ needs and strengths change, the guided-reading groups will also change.

According to Tompkins (2004), guided-reading lessons can last approximately 25 to 30 minutes. During guided-reading, the teacher is to respond and praise each reader, taking notes on each reader and the strategies being used. Allington & Cunningham (1999) state that one of the more important essentials that teachers need to do during guided-reading is explain and model the important things to be done while reading. Tompkins (2004) states that after reading takes place, the group responds to the reading, making connections to the text. The teacher will then involve students in exploring activities, such as strategy instruction, word work, or literary analysis. According to Allington & Cunningham (1999), guided-reading instruction will provide students with the help they need to develop proficiency.

Choral Reading. A strategy used within guided-reading is choral reading. During choral reading, students read at the same time as the teacher, or use echo reading, where the students repeat or echo what the teacher reads. Choral reading is a wonderful method to use with rhymes and poetry (Allington & Cunningham, 1999; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Padak & Rasinski, 2001; Tompkins, 2004). According to Tompkins (2004), there are many forms of choral reading that can be used. There is the echo reading, in which the teacher or leader would read each line and the student or group would repeat the line just read. Small group readings are found where the class or group would be divided into two or more groups and each group would read one part of
the poem or rhyme. Cumulative readings is where one student or group would read the first line and then another student or group would join in as each line is read. These forms are useful in making the readers active participants with poetry and rhyme, as well as assist in building a reader’s fluency (Allington & Cunningham, 1999; Padak & Rasinski, 2001; Tompkins, 2004).

**Paired Reading.** Paired or buddy reading is another reading activity used. Paired reading is the pairing of two students in reading so that one student is a stronger reader than the other. By pairing up a strong reader with a weaker reader, teachers facilitate and support language acquisition of English language learners. The advanced reader simultaneously can become more independent and fluent as a reader, and the weaker student is learning from the modeling taking place. Both students are taking turns reading and supporting each other as they read (Allington & Cunningham, 1999; Padak & Rasinski, 2001; Tompkins, 2004).

**Visual Aids.** Visuals can also be used to support reading. Charts in various forms can help support reading for various reading levels. According to Allington & Cunningham (1999), the use of story maps can help reinforce understanding of the text. A story map can help give students a structure of how to retell a story by defining elements in a story, such as characters, settings, problems, events, resolutions, and themes. Another visual form includes semantic mapping. This is a strategy used to help students think about what they already know about a topic before they even read it (Tompkins, 2004).

An excellent visual strategy used to support reading, especially expository text, is called K-W-L charts. This is also one way for students to take notes. Therefore, it is important for teachers to give students various strategies, to allow students to select the method that works best for them (Piazza, 2003). When using a K-W-L chart, the students and the class can use a visual chart to identify, “K,” what they know; “W,” what they want to know; and “L,” what they
learned (Ogle, 1986). K-W-L charts are generally separated into three separate columns (Piazza, 2003).

Readers Theater can also be a great visual tool to demonstrate comprehension of students. Endo and Miller (2004) felt that visual manipulatives, along with written words, can reinforce what is being said and taught. Readers Theater is taking a story that is read and making it into a play. The students do not read a script word for word, instead they give the characters voice, use facial expressions, and hand gestures, putting their own interpretations of the characters into the story. There is no need to use scenery, props, or costumes. The use of readers theater can allow students to personally express how they interpret text, as well as demonstrate their understanding of the story (Padak & Rasinski 2001; Tompkins 2004).

**Writing Strategies**

As a teacher, it is important to know various ways to support our students in writing. One way to support students’ writing is through modeling. According to Calkins (1994), it is important for teachers to write in front of the students and create meaningful text for real purposes. Students need to know that adults write letters, lists, poems, Post-it notes, diary entries, or recipes. Students should be invited and expected to be a part of this purposeful and meaningful writing.

**Model Writing.** Independent writing is where the students are able to write independently through the use of journals, stories, or even letters. Teachers should encourage students to write independently each day. An excellent way to promote independent writing is model writing as a teacher. When students are given time to write in their journals, the teacher should also be writing in their journals. Teachers should always share their writing, which encourages students to share their writing. Another way to encourage journal writing is to not refer to a journal as a
journal, but as a “lifebook,” “dreamkeeper,” or even “the vault” (Calkins, 1994). Calkins further explains that whatever works for the students—have them give it a name. As students write in their journals, it is important to encourage them to write frequently. Having students decorate the outside of the journal with photos, pictures, or colors will make it their own. The key to making journaling important to students is to make it important to the teacher. The teacher should show students that he/she writes at home, on a trip, on the weekend, or even after he/she has a thought. Writing should become an important part of their life.

Another approach to model writing is through “think-alouds.” This format demonstrates to students the thought process the teacher is using during writing (Tompkins, 2004). According to Piazza (2003), teachers verbalize what he/she is thinking about as they are writing. The teacher is able to direct the student’s attention to the characteristics of a writing sample and demonstrate how to tackle a problem and resolve it. The idea is for the teacher to model strategies and behaviors that the students can later imitate (Piazza, 2003).

**Guided Writing.** Guided writing is used to support writing as a structured lesson. The teacher works with small groups who are reading at similar reading levels and using similar reading strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Tompkins, 2004). According to Tompkins (2004), the teacher presents or teaches a lesson and then supervises as the students write. Piazza (2003) refers to guided reading as “scaffolding.” A way to promote guided writing is through class created books, step-by-step books, or personal created books.

Guided writing can also be used to teach minilessons in writing. According to Piazza (2003), many guided writing moments occur as “teachable moments,” where a situation presents the opportunity for the teacher to use strategies and suggestions on the spot. The teacher can teach steps of the writing process, story writing, or how to write a certain way. This provides the
teacher with a format to monitor and gage a student’s progress. According to Fountas and Pinnell (1996), the ultimate goal in guided writing is to assist students in learning how to apply independent writing strategies successfully.

**Shared Writing.** Another popular writing strategy is shared writing, which takes place between the teacher and students, or in group writing situations, which take place between students (Allington & Cunningham, 1999). Shared writing can be used to write numerous things such as stories, essays, poems, retellings, journal entries, shared experiences, observations, morning message, or reports (Routman, 1991). In shared writing both the teacher and the student “share” the formation of the writing. An example used by Allington and Cunningham (1999) is the creation of a daily journal for the class journal. The teacher then would ask students what things would need to be included. The teacher would listen to all the suggestions students may give and accept any dialect the students use. The teacher would then select the order and proper form in which to present the sentences, followed by writing the sentences and reading them to the class. This format allows the teacher to rework any awkward sentence constructions that the students gave (Allington & Cunningham, 1999).

A format of shared writing recommended by Drucker (2003) for teachers to use is the Language Experience Approach (LEA). According to Drucker (2003), using LEA ensures that students can share and express the context of the material they are reading. LEA has been described as having students talk about an experience that they have had while the teacher acts as a scribe, writing down the students’ words (Allington & Cunningham, 1999; Drucker, 2003; Piazza 2003; Tompkins, 2004). LEA allows the student(s) to see what the words would look like. This is a strategy that is used to help student’s associate text with spoken language.
The LEA approach begins by the student(s) discussing an experience they have had. After a student discusses the experience the teacher records the students’ words as the student speaks, word for word. The text that develops is then reading material. This strategy is effective because it is the students’ experience and their words, therefore making the text easier to read (Tompkins, 2004). According to Padak and Rasinski (2001), LEA can take place in whole groups, small groups, or even individual circumstances. The critical components of LEA is that it contains lots of language experiences, sharing, exploring, and even problem-solving. Drucker (2003) recommends using interactive writing with LEA. In interactive writing, the student shares the writing event with their teacher. Specifically, the student participates in the writing of text that grows from their own experiences. Drucker states that interactive writing is especially successful in early grades, first through third. In this way, writing goes hand in hand with reading.

**Interactive Writing.** Interactive writing is another form of supporting writing in a classroom. In interactive writing the student and teacher both write and share the writing (also referred to as “sharing the pen”) (Tompkins, 2004; Piazza, 2003). Interactive writing is different at different grade levels. In the K-2 levels, the teacher and students take turns writing letters and words to make complete sentences and paragraphs (Piazza, 2003). According to Tompkins (2004), the teacher and the students review spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and other important writing skills. In interactive writing the ownership is shifted onto the student, while still allowing the support of the teacher (Piazza, 2003). Tompkins (2004) also states that the teacher can involve students in correcting errors. If and when the students make a mistake, the teacher has the opportunity to have a teachable moment to clarify misunderstanding and review specific writing skills that need attention.
One important way schools and teachers can do to support bilingual students is through family literacy. First, we need to define exactly what we think family literacy is. According to Morrow’s article found in *Reading Today* (Dec2003/Jan2004), “family literacy encompasses the ways family members use literacy at home and in their community. Family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps adults and children.” Morrow further stated that there are many family literacy programs available. One of the main goals is to make families aware of the things that they can do in everyday life to promote the literacy of their children and what else they can do to increase their efforts.

There is also a need to understand that experiences students bring to the classroom may be different from one student to another. Morrow (2003/3004) shared that some of the literacy practices that are used in classrooms may not be as meaningful for some students as for others. She explained that this is partly because the pre-literacy experiences students have may differ. For example, in some cultures literacy activity is centered around storytelling. Some of the things children have been exposed to at home may be different from reading a book. She further stated that family literacy needs to be approached by teachers in ways that avoid cultural bias. Morrow adds that teachers need to be aware of what stories children bring to the classroom. They also need to be supportive, rather than appear to be prying into students’ home life (Morrow, Dec2003/Jan2004).

**General Education Classrooms**

According to an article by Endo and Miller (2004), there are several things that the classroom teacher can do to help bilingual students. One of the first things the authors discuss is reducing the cognitive load for these students. Teachers should try to choose activities and
assignments that would allow all students to be able to draw from their prior experiences. Another step Endo and Miller (2004) discussed was for teachers to evaluate their own teaching strategies and approaches. Different students may react differently to how a teacher manages or runs his/her classroom.

Still another step suggested by the authors was to reduce the cultural load. They explained that teachers need to respect the English learners’ home, community, and primary language. Teachers should take measures to include all the cultures in the classroom as often as possible. Endo and Miller (2004) also suggested reducing the language load for the English learners, explaining that teachers can rewrite difficult texts by using simpler terms, or at least reword the complicated text in a simpler way. Another way to make difficult text easier to understand, is to use more visual manipulatives, along with the text, to reinforce or explain what is being discussed for students.

Endo and Miller (2004), report that parents and teachers need to work together as a team. Teachers should welcome parents as a resource for teaching. The authors also discuss that teachers can have parents come and visit the classrooms to talk about their culture and display items from that country. The authors emphasize the importance of involving parents in the school and accessing the resources that these families can provide for the school and community. Having students’ families involved in the classrooms can help show bilingual students that they are valued in the classroom (Endo & Miller, 2004).

**Achieving Proficiency**

When teachers consider what proficiency is they need to look at various aspects of proficiency. For example, Drucker (2003) states that academic proficiency is referring to an ability to use language not only for reading and writing, but to obtain information in various
content areas. Earlier, it was discussed that laws today state that LEP students must be to a “proficient” level in English within 3 years. There are many problems with this standard.

According to Dr. Jim Cummins (2006), Professor in the Modern Language Centre at the University of Toronto, acquiring basic communication skills or conversational fluency in English takes 2-5 years to obtain. Cummins reports that academic proficiency takes much longer. In order to develop cognitive academic language processing or proficiency, he suggests that students may need anywhere from 4-7 years. Even though a student may appear proficient or capable of being proficient because they can speak and understand a language, teachers need to understand that this does not mean that they have developed academic proficiency.

**Involving Families**

It is crucial to involve the families of all our students. According to Bronwyn and Coltrane (2003), parents are their children’s first teachers in life. It is so imperative that programs aiding ELL students also build on facilitating partnerships between teachers and parents. Bronwyn and Coltrane (2003) further state, that for teachers, it can be very valuable to tap into the cultural and linguistic knowledge of parents and family. Teachers can use this information as a source or basis for instruction of all the students in their classroom. According to Morrow (Dec2003/Jan2004), creating supportive environments for bilingual families will enhance teachers’ own literacy, as well as promote the literacy of their children. With this in mind, we need to learn and respect the pre-literacy experiences that children bring to school, including storytelling or other forms of literacy. Books may not be readily available to them (Morrow, Dec2003/2004).

Morrow also stated that teachers need to promote and encourage family involvement. Schools and teachers both need to view families as partners in the success and achievement of
the students. Teachers can try to make themselves available at various times of the day, making themselves more available to families who would like to be more involved, but have difficulties due to work or unusual hours. She continued to share that teachers can find and provide support for families who cannot read or who do not know English, but want to learn English. Teachers can also bring families up to date about what is happening in the schools and how they can help their children (Morrow, Dec 2003/Jan 2004). The message is to reach out and involve the families.

**Supporting Reading and Writing for Bilingual Students**

When looking at literacy development, using similar activities for struggling readers in general will help both first and second language learners (Allington & Cunningham, 1999; Boyle & Peregoy, 1990). According to Drucker (2003), there are many teaching strategies teachers can follow to support bilingual students. In working with ESL students, teachers can use paired reading. By using paired reading, Drucker (2003) states that it helps ESL students with fluency and accuracy in reading. He further discusses that when pairing; place an ELL student with a more skilled or at level reader. This can allow the English language learners to read along. English language learning students should also be encouraged to reread the text aloud.

Drucker (2003) further recommends that shared reading can also provide English language learners with a chance to hear and experience language while being able to examine its equivalent phonological representation. When selecting text for shared reading, it is important to choose text that matches with the cultural diversity and background of students, including English language learners. Having multicultural literature available is a positive addition or asset to have for all students, in all grades (Drucker, 2003; Norton, 1990). Drucker (2003) further states that having multicultural literature in the classroom and using the literature, regardless of
whether your class is culturally diverse, will help all students become more aware of other cultures.

Drucker (2003) also recommends that all students have plenty of opportunities to read on their own as well as opportunities to read on their own. It is just as important for teachers to make time for reading aloud, which can support all students’ vocabulary development. In a study by Freeman & Freeman (2000), teachers read to their students 3 times a day. The findings indicate that group vocabulary scores rose by 40% (Drucker, 2003).

**Conclusion of Literature Review**

There is much to be learned about bilingual students and family literacy. As stated by both Hammer et al. (2003) and Denny et al. (2001), there are few investigations or studies that have examined the home literacy practices, the literacy development of Hispanic families, and the literacy results of school-age bilingual children. What has expanded the problem is our understanding of what bilingual students and their families face. We need to better understand the experiences bilingual students and their families bring to schools and the language shock that bilingual students face. We also need to consider the amount and quality of literacy taking place at home.

Adding to these difficult problems, comes the problems teachers face. According to the literature, there is a serious lack of teacher preparation in working with bilingual students. Teachers need to be provided with adequate training to meet the needs of our bilingual students. Teachers and schools need to become aware of the challenges that bilingual students and their families face; they further need to learn about a variety of learning tools they can use to make learning successful for the students and their families.
The NCLB Act requires states to test limited English proficient children for reading and language arts in English after they have attended school in the United States for three consecutive years. However, this law contradicts research that tells us that LEP students need 5 to 7 years in a language program to reach academic proficiency (Miller & Endo, 2004). Having a law that demands a specific level of achievement and then having research tell us something entirely different creates confusion, stress, and unrealistic goals for the success of our bilingual students.

This review of literature also revealed the importance of literacy in home environment. Research also exposed many possible factors that contribute to the success or lack of success for bilingual families, depending on their ability to speak English. The research suggested that exposure to books was more important than speaking English or Spanish in the home environment. Regardless of the home language spoken, exposure to books in the home environment, prior to school involvement, is highly valuable.

According to the research, there is much that schools and teachers can do to help themselves and the bilingual students and their families. Being aware can be a teachers’ most powerful tool for supporting the learning of a bilingual student. Teachers can learn about the cultures and experiences that each of their students bring to their classroom. Educators should also understand that although a student may appear fluent, this does not imply that academic proficiency of a language. Schools and teachers should also involve parents and families in students’ education and tap into the funds of knowledge that families can bring into a classroom.

In summary, teachers should tackle reading and writing proficiency by using supportive measures to facilitate learning for all students. The accommodations that teachers make can be
beneficial for all students in a classroom. Overall, it is the understanding, awareness, and actions that teachers take that supports successful literacy learning of bilingual students.
A HOME LITERACY EXPERIENCE:

A CASE STUDY

Subject Description

The student was an eight year old girl from Guatemala. I met Jennifer in July of 2004. Her family had been in the United States for under a year. Jennifer lived with her mother, Gloria, and father, Hector. Jennifer had two older siblings, Jasmine age 12 and Albin age 14. Both of Jennifer’s parents had very limited English, and only spoke Spanish in the home. Jennifer was not happy to be in the United States and has had a difficult time adjusting to school in the United States. At the end 2003/2004 school year, Jennifer was going into the third grade with a first grade reading level.

Procedure

The task was to tutor Jennifer in reading and help her comfortably adjust to reading and writing in English. The tutoring first took place at Eastern Michigan University’s library, but due to difficulty the family had getting there, a majority of the tutoring took place in the family’s home. The primary focus was to work on Jennifer’s fluency. However, I also took time to work with both of Jennifer’s siblings to build on my understanding of the family’s literacy practices within the home. Throughout the duration of the tutoring, I kept a journal that monitored each session, what was worked on, and reflected on what I was learning.
First Meeting with Jennifer Franco was on July 1, 2004. Met at Eastern Michigan University Library from 6pm until 8pm.

First Impression of Jennifer

Jennifer appeared to be shy. She was a very clean and pretty girl. She seemed very happy to be meeting with me. She has an accent when she speaks. Her family is from Guatemala. Jennifer has an older brother named Albin, who is 14 and an older sister named Jasmine, who is 12.

First Impression of Jennifer’s Mother

I was told that her mother spoke very little English if any. When I spoke to Gloria on the phone, she spoke only in Spanish and told me that she did not speak English. However, during my first meeting with Jennifer, I was able to observe that she understands more than she is willing to admit. They were a few minutes late arriving. Her mother brought a young niece from Chicago with them that day. She was six and very bright. Gloria stayed the entire duration of our session.

Breaking the Ice

Jennifer was not very talkative. I brought out the “I Am Poem.” I had made one out about myself to break the ice. Jennifer displayed a lot of difficulty. At this point I am unclear as to whether she does not understand, having trouble coming up with answers, or just being shy.

Quick Observation

One of the first things I was able to observe during our first meeting was how she spelled. In doing our “I Am Poem,” I observed that Jennifer attempted to use sound spelling. This process would normally be successful and encouraged by teachers when spelling. However, in Jennifer’s case, when she sound spells, she is sound spelling words as they would sound in Spanish. I think that this is going to be a big obstacle for Jennifer as she progresses in Language Arts. I think Jennifer needs to expand her English vocabulary and focus on that in order to achieve in both word recognition and spelling.
First Meeting with Jennifer Franco was on July 1, 2004. Met at Eastern Michigan University Library from 6pm until 8pm. CONTINUED

First Book Read

I laid out numerous books from home for Jennifer to choose from. One book she knew from school was, Oh Cats. I asked her to read the book, and she read the entire thing. She then got very excited to see that I had a book called Pinocchio’s Nose Grows. Jennifer displayed some difficulty with this book. To make it easier on her we alternated pages to read. I quickly observed that Jennifer’s greatest setback is her English vocabulary. In the story she did not know what a wand was or a wood carver (even though the pictures were very descriptive). I think perhaps she is unclear on how to use the pictures for comprehension or to fill in the gaps. The words she had problems with today were cricket, fairy, and promised.

Discussion of Interests

Jennifer discussed that she enjoys reading Clifford and Madeline. I asked her if she would like to check out a Clifford book from the library. She said yes. So I told her we would look it up by title. She stopped me and asked me what a title was. So I took a quick minute to explain a title of a book. I have plans to break down the contents of a book to Jennifer, because she says that she does not know what they are or understand them. She picked two books from the library about Madeline. I also selected a book for her to read that is on her list from school called, The Fat Cat Sat on the Mat.

Other Observations

When Jennifer read the “ed” sound at the end of a word, it would come out sounding like “id”. For example, “Like-id” not “liked.” She could not understand how the sound was made. Jennifer also seems to be distant. Perhaps it is her being shy, but I feel that she is really withdrawn. Her mother kept interrupting as Jennifer was working with me and perhaps that created a problem. I also waited 12 minutes for them to arrive to the library, so perhaps tardiness is part of the problem.
Second Meeting with Jennifer Franco was on July 7, 2004. Met at Eastern Michigan University Library from 6:10pm until 7:45pm.

Meeting Jennifer’s Sister Jasmine

I met Jasmine for the first time. She is a happy twelve year old girl. She asked if she could sit in and work with us. I thought it would be a great idea to get Jennifer to open up and get involved. Their mother Gloria decided that by staying she may be slowing Jennifer down. She dropped off the girls with me. Gloria was again 10 minutes late dropping off the girls. I had a minute to talk to Gloria about the situation and what I felt would help Jennifer. We agreed to add an extra day a week to work together. Jasmine was very different from Jennifer. Jasmine was a talker. She is very outgoing and is much further along in her vocabulary and reading. I feel her eagerness to learn and being outgoing has played a huge role in her success. She is a delight and made Jennifer more talkative and involved.

Went Over Reading

Jennifer let me know that the Madeline book she checked out was at home. She read, *The Fat Cat Sat on the Mat*. I also introduced Jennifer and her sister to Laura Numeroff’s collection of books. We began with, *If You Take a Mouse to School*. The two girls alternated pages. Before we began, we covered who the author and illustrators were. We also discussed a title page. We discussed words in the book that might be difficult. I am learning that with Jennifer, if I do not ask her what a word means, she may not know and will not ask. Jennifer had problems with larger words like experiment, which was understandable. Afterwards, she had trouble knowing what an experiment was. When she doesn’t understand something, we stop and take time to discuss. I try to do all my explanations in English to give her a better English explanation. However, if all else fails, I will explain it in Spanish. She knew how to say the word “Clay”, but did not know what clay was. Overall, she did very well with the book.

Went Over Past

When I began to discuss things that Jennifer might like to do and activities I wanted to work on, she began to share
Second Meeting with Jennifer Franco was on July 7, 2004. Met at Eastern Michigan University Library from 6:10pm until 7:45pm.

CONTINUED

how her last tutor used colored index cards to work on word recognition and building. I had mine set up differently, but after talking to her, I will change them all to make her more comfortable working with them.

I made up our first rule today. No Spanish while we are working, unless she has no other way to ask or explain something.

I have created a reward system that has Jennifer tickled. I have a book chart that Jennifer can keep track of her books on. Then I have another chart with two large trees with ten empty apples on them. For every four books that Jennifer reads, she gets to place a sticker on an apple. Once Jennifer fills an entire sheet (10 space = 40 books), I will take her to buy a new book of her choice. She loved the idea and could not wait to get started.

I also brought two notebooks for Jennifer to choose from. I told her that we would both start keeping a journal and writing in it each day. I brought a journal that I keep at home for her to see. I also told her that I would keep one for her to read whenever she likes and we could share our writing. She seemed a bit nervous, but agreed. I asked Jennifer to go home and write about a silly animal. Jennifer did not know what silly meant and we discussed it. I am realizing that slang or descriptive words outside of basic English can be very confusing for Jennifer.

We discussed word games that we could play and ways to motivate her reading. I created a reward system for Jennifer. I asked Jennifer if she would like to work with the letters to make words. She said that she used them before, and it was fun. I brought them out and asked if she knew how to change the first letter to make a new word. She looked puzzled. I asked her if she wanted me to show her how and she said yes. I made the word “Mat,” by changing the first letter from a “C” to an “M.” I explained that this was a word family and that we would work on it some more next time. Jennifer would make a word and I would add a letter to change the word, she loved it. For each word we made we had to use it in a sentence.

Added 2nd rule. While Jennifer and Jasmine are together with me, they had to use English to communicate too.

Played With the Letters to Make Words
Second Meeting with Jennifer Franco was on July 7, 2004. Met at Eastern Michigan University Library from 6:10pm until 7:45pm. CONTINUED

Worked on High Frequency Words

We then worked on flash cards of high frequency words. There were some that she knew right away or could read. However, if I asked her to use the words in a sentence, she replied that she didn’t know what they were. I am beginning to get the feeling that some of the words are in memory or she was applying 1st language reading strategies to read. When Jennifer does not know a word, she gets a sad blank look to her face. I told her that we will get her right up there in no time. I asked Jennifer if she didn’t know a word if we could let her sister Jasmine try to use the words in sentences. She liked the idea, and the same went on for Jasmine. She knew more words, but it appeared that she was frustrated and had forgotten a lot from being out of school. She would laugh and attempt all of the words with a great attitude. I hope that the modeling encourages Jennifer to participate more.

Acknowledging Interests

Jennifer became very excited to see that I had remembered her interest in Clifford the Big Red Dog. I brought three books for Jennifer to take home to read. I also gave Jennifer a book titled, Grandma’s Trick or Treat. It is a level 2 books from the “I Can Read Series.” I want to see how Jennifer does with it. We have a new system to use while she is reading. I gave Jennifer a pack of post-its. Whenever, Jennifer doesn’t know a word or doesn’t know what it means, she will place a post-it on that page. We would later go over the words and the story. Both of the girls like the Laura Numeroff book, so I let them know we would continue next time with another one of her books.

Assignments

I assigned Jennifer to read as many books as she could and to use the post-its for questions. I reminded her to try to write in her journal everyday. I told her that there are some days that I don’t feel like writing, but I may draw a picture and that it would be alright for her to do the same thing. My hopes are to get Jennifer to participate in any amount of writing I could. I will also use the journal writing to assess her progress and what areas need work. I told Jasmine
Second Meeting with Jennifer Franco was on July 7, 2004. Met at Eastern Michigan University Library from 6:10pm until 7:45pm.

because of her high interest in working with us, I would try to get her started on everything that I was doing with Jennifer. Jennifer liked the idea of her sister working with us. I think building competition between the two girls may spark a light with Jennifer.

We had to wait 10 minutes after for Gloria to show up to pick up the girls. I reminded her of the time and that I have an hour drive home after each session. Like the last time she apologized and I said I would see her on Friday, July 9th.

LATE AGAIN!

Third Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 9th, 2004. Met from 6:20pm until 8:30pm.

Today began with a change in plans. The university’s library has changed its hours for the summer, and we had to make other arrangements for meeting. I followed Gloria back to their home. The Franco’s home is located in a trailer park and was very small in space. I asked if they had a place for us to work. The space in the home was too small, so a table and chairs was set up outdoors. At least working at their home will cut out the problem with tardiness. Jennifer appears to be excited about working at home and more comfortable.

Change of Plans

Went Over Work Done

I brought out my journal to show Jennifer what I had written. I asked her to read it and asked if I could read hers. She gave me hers, and I noticed that her story was not in her own writing. She explained that Jasmine wrote it for her. So, we discussed why it was important for Jennifer to do her own work and to write herself. The entries that Jennifer did write were very insightful. She used invented spelling as she has been taught to do, continuing to use Spanish sounds for her English spelling. Work will need to be done on phonemic sounds in English.

Books Read!

Jennifer was very excited to show me the books she read on her chart. She read three Clifford books and the extra book I gave her to read. We went over some of the vocabulary that Jennifer had problems with. At first she said that she
Third Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 9th, 2004. Met from 6:20pm until 8:30pm. CONTINUED

New Items & Books

understood everything. I went through the books and asked her questions about what things were and what happened in the stories. For example, I asked her what a hiccups was and she didn’t know. I am learning that I need to ask Jennifer questions about vocabulary that she may not see all the time. So, I will continue to skim through all books she reads and ask questions, lots of questions. Jennifer seems to like when we talk about new vocabulary, and she learns new things. I hope that as this process continues she will be able to approach me with more questions.

After working last time with Jennifer and introducing word families, I came up with an idea. I made a word family wheel. I had her keep The Fat Cat Sat on the Mat and today she found out why. I made the first wheel using the “at” word family. All the words used in the book were on the word family wheel. I let her keep it, and she loved it. I also made another wheel using the beginning onset “sh.” I found she was having trouble putting sounds together. The “sh” wheel had words like, shark, sheep, sharp, short, etc. She enjoyed this wheel as well. I found a great website to create word searches. The website is called NASA Kid’s Word Find (http://nasakids.com/) I thought creating simple word searches would help to build her vocabulary and create great discussions for us. I am using words from her high frequency list, topics of interest for her, and stories that she reads.

I also gave Jasmine the journal I had started and told her now she can write with us. I made new charts for her to join and earn stickers too. She was very excited and shows a great deal of eagerness to learn.

Today I had Jennifer tell me about each of her stories that she has read. She is telling me that she is having trouble remembering what she read, but that she truly read the books. To ensure that she is reading the books without difficulty, I ask her to select one of the books and read it to me. She did so with no problem and afterwards explained that she forgot how the story went. I notice that Jennifer is able to read in English by applying her first language skills to reading, but that she doesn’t understand what she is reading. She is more successful when she reads aloud.

The girls were both very excited to see that I brought another Laura Numeroff book to read. Today we read If
Third Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 9th, 2004. Met from 6:20pm until 8:30pm. CONTINUED

You Give a Mouse a Cookie. The girls again alternated pages and had a great time with the story.

A Surprise

I brought a surprise for the girls. My six year old daughter had received Your Big Backyard Magazine. She took great care of them and saved the entire year. My daughter offered to give them to Jennifer and her sister. The girls loved it! They started looking at them right away and asking questions about frogs and if I had any in the lake that I lived on. So, we decided that we would start to read about frogs next time.

Extra English

I also learned that the family’s home television is only in Spanish, there was no English at all. This was puzzling for me to try to figure a way to get these kids to use more English. I brought the girls two Disney videos for them to watch and told them that each week I would bring them two new videos to watch. This can help to keep them exposed to English everyday. I have also asked that the girls spend more time practicing in English with one another. However, both admit that it’s easier to talk in Spanish.

Assignments

I am leaving a book called Oliver for Jennifer to read. I asked her to continue writing in her journal. I am leaving some word searches for her to do. I asked her to go over the magazine about frogs. I am also leaving a book on frogs called Fantastic Frogs. Both girls can read about frogs and find something to share about a frog and illustrate it.

Fourth Meeting with Jennifer at their house. Met on July 14th, 2004. Met from 5:45pm to 8:10pm.

Today the girls were excited to work. I brought a lot of books to share. Our routine has begun with Jennifer and Jasmine sharing about the books they read, followed by a discussion of the vocabulary and comprehension. We go through and place the stickers on their charts.

As for work assigned for this meeting, Jennifer did not do any of the work. Jasmine was proud and excited that she did all of her work. I realize that I need to speak to Gloria before I leave to address what is going on. I can’t get through to Jennifer. When I asked her why she wasn’t doing her work, she said that she didn’t know what she had
Fourth Meeting with Jennifer at their house. Met on July 14th, 2004. Met from 5:45pm to 8:10pm. CONTINUED

Go Over Reading and READ!

We began to talk about frogs. We read books about where frogs came from and the different parts of the world that frogs can be found. I gave each of the girls a puzzle about ponds and things found in ponds to work on. Both of the girls asked a lot of questions during this session, which is just what I was hoping. Their questions were more about what things were, because they weren’t in their vocabulary. I had to do a lot of explaining to them in Spanish because Jennifer could not understand things, such as, what reeds are, what lily pads are, the lily flower, etc. They saw pictures, but again have trouble looking at the pictures for clues.

Flash Card Time

I thought while we were working so much on vocabulary that today would be a great day to focus on vocab building. Jennifer has shown me the deck of index cards that her prior tutor used with her. I took those index cards and began to use them to see if she knew all of them. I knew that she would be able to read all of them, but did she understand all of them. NO SHE COULDN’T! I noticed that she did not know a large percent of them. At this point, I don’t know if she knew them at one time and has forgotten them, or if she never really learned them properly into her vocabulary. I will continue to work and build on these cards.

Continued Favorite

I brought back another Laura Numeroff book. Today we read If You Give a Pig a Pancake. I think this was their favorite so far. We discussed things such as syrup and pancakes that they were not familiar with in their culture. I hope to find more books that they enjoy as much as these.

Homework

I brought many books for the girls to read and select from again. I left a book on the short “I” sound called Little Bit. I then asked her to write four sentences that used words that had the short “I” sound. I also brought for a surprise, another Laura Numeroff book, If You Give a Moose a Muffin, with a tape recording of the book. This way the girls could read the book in English, giving them...
Fourth Meeting with Jennifer at their house. Met on July 14th, 2004. Met from 5:45pm to 8:10pm. CONTINUED

Talk With Mom

I spoke with Gloria (all conversations are in Spanish.) I let her know what we have been doing and how. She checks in from time to time to watch and see what we are doing. I explained that Jennifer wasn’t doing her work. She said that she doesn’t know what to do to get her interested in learning English. I asked her if Jennifer was having trouble with anything else. She stated that Jennifer didn’t want to be here in the U.S. and that she wanted to go home to Guatemala. Gloria stated that Jennifer doesn’t see any point in learning this stuff because she wants to go home to Guatemala.

I took the time to tell her how well Jasmine was doing. She said that Jasmine has always enjoyed learning and does well in school, but Jennifer is different.

We called Jennifer into the room to talk. When I watched her mother talk with her, I noticed Jennifer shut-down. Her face went blank, emotionless, and she stared into space. Gloria became more angry and frustrated. I talked to her and recommended that she try to encourage reading and maybe have the girls read to her or talk about what they are reading. I told her that we would work on things and that it may take some time.

I called their home and left messages. I haven’t heard from the family about a cancellation. They do not have a house phone, so all calls have been left on their cell phone. By 7pm, I hadn’t heard from the family and figured time was cancelled.

When I arrived at the home, I asked Gloria what happened on Friday. Gloria explained that she forgot and didn’t check her voicemail. She said a friend had a new baby, and they went to see them. I am frustrated with the tardiness and lack of communication/involvement. I addressed the issue with Gloria, and she apologized again. I feel that I will need to continue to put up with such circumstances because of my commitment to help these kids.

Friday July 16th, 2004. NO WORD

Fifth Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 21, 2004 from 5:55pm until 8:20pm.

more language opportunities. We also began to talk about the five senses, so I brought by some books on that as well. The girls need to continue to write in their journals, work on puzzles, and reading. I also encouraged Jennifer to finish work that she did not do.
Fifth Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 21, 2004 from 5:55pm until 8:20pm. CONTINUED

Gone Over Work & Reading

Jennifer brought out her journal and had her sentences completed. She didn’t write in her journal, but she did some drawing in the journal, which was a start. She said she listened to the audio book of Laura Numeroff many times and loved it. She also read the book Little Bit. However, that was all the work she had done.

Work Done

Today was a focus on areas that Jennifer was having trouble in or avoiding. We spent a lot of time talking about her interests in life and school. Jennifer started to talk about wanting to go back to Guatemala and why she doesn’t like being here in the U.S. I GOT IT! Jennifer talked about how she doesn’t have any friends at school and that many kids make fun of her. She said that it has happened in class and the teacher has done nothing. She says it has also happened on the bus. Jennifer doesn’t feel accepted at school. Working with her this summer is giving her something to look forward to; she is enjoying herself more everyday. Now if I could find a way to motivate her.

Revisited

Today, because of how things were progressing, I thought, instead of introducing something new to Jennifer, we would use today to review. We went over the contents of print/book. She did well. She sometimes got confused I would ask things out of order to be sure that she understood the information. Jennifer tries to memorize things in order and thinks it will work. So we would go through books we have read and discuss the elements.

More Flash Cards

Continued working w/ Jennifer on her flash cards. She continued to not know many. The more I work with Jennifer the more I feel that her strongest setback is her knowledge of vocabulary. She gets so frustrated when she doesn’t understand something. Jennifer and her sister need more than just my interaction with them for four hours a week. I encouraged them to only use English with one another and to practice.
Fifth Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 21, 2004 from 5:55pm until 8:20pm. CONTINUED

Homework Assignments

Jennifer is to finish any unfinished work. Continue to write in their journals. Jennifer has been more confident in talking about characters and story discussions. I gave each of the girls a worksheet/book report form to fill out on any book of their choice. It could even be about a book they have read before.

Expressed Interest

The girls expressed interest in learning about the five senses and reading about them. So my homework is to find what I can teach them about the senses.

Plans for Friday!

I had at the beginning informed Gloria that Friday, July 23rd, I had a prior engagement and would be unavailable to meet with the girls.
I also discussed with Gloria that I would like to continue to work and get support from her on building Jennifer’s self-esteem about herself and her education. If Gloria could continue the efforts while I am away, I think that it would bring Jennifer to new heights of acceptance and success.

Sixth Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 28th, 2004 from 5:40pm to 7:55pm.

Gone Over Homework

I started by telling the girls that I did my homework and asked if they did theirs. They both brought out their journals. Jasmine completed EVERYTHING. She is doing great. I will start to give her more challenging things to work on. Jennifer completed her report, but wrote very little in her journal. I then showed the girls all the books I brought and how I wanted to teach them about the senses.

Work Done

First, we read the book My Five Senses, by Aliki. The girls really enjoyed it. We had great discussions about the book and all the senses. Then the girls got out a piece of paper. I told them I was going to show them how we use our senses
Sixth Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 28th, 2004 from 5:40pm to 7:55pm. CONTINUED

to describe things by using adjectives. I always have a bag of gummy bears for rewards and treat for the girls, so out came the bears. I had the girls begin by writing the sense of sight down. I asked them what they saw when they looked at the bear. We then proceeded with each of the other senses, ending with their favorite, TASTE! They loved this activity.

MORE BOOKS!

We then moved onto reading more books. We read You Can’t Taste a Pickle with Your Ear. This book made the girls laugh. Then we moved onto a book called Shoes, focusing on the “e” sound.

Flash Cards

We reviewed cards again. We discussed words that she didn’t understand. The conversation led to us talking about feelings and what are the different types of feelings that a person can have. I was hoping that Jennifer would be interested in the various types of feelings and expressing moods that she was in or experiencing.

New Interest

Today I introduced Jamie Lee Curtis’s series of books. We read Today I Feel Silly. The girls loved the book and asked if I had more of her books. I let Jasmine know that I would be bringing more difficult books for her to read.

Homework Assignments

The girls will be turning in their journals every Wednesday for me to look over and respond to. They liked the idea of having a break from writing. I told them that the only thing I wanted them to work on for Friday was reading. I also left a stack of index cards that were things found around the house. Their task was to see how many things they could identify in their house, and we would review next time.

Talk With Mom

I finally had the opportunity to speak to Gloria again. I suggested perhaps meeting with the girls two days in a row, rather than having a few days gap in between. I wanted to see if the information they learn sinks in stronger with back to back reinforcement. She said that she thought it was a great idea, and hopefully it will help Jennifer.

I then expressed that I was concerned with Jennifer. I explained that she is showing great interest and working very hard while I am there, but that she is still not completing the work while I am away. I asked what
Sixth Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 28th, 2004 from 5:40pm to 7:55pm. CONTINUED

happens when Jennifer doesn’t complete work in school. Both Gloria and Jennifer said nothing happens. I also told her mom that I feel Jennifer has gotten good at making others feel that she can’t do the work when she can. Her mother said she felt helpless and didn’t know what to do. I suggest that perhaps the family could try English time each night, anywhere from ½ an hour to 1 hour a night. She told me that they could try that. I also recommended having Jennifer read to her in English and encourage and praise her when she does. I explained that perhaps if the entire family seems involved in the work, it would be more motivating for Jennifer to do the work. I have learned that Gloria understands a great deal more English then she let on. However, she explained that she would rather use Spanish. I am heartbroken for the progress of these kids and the family. I shared with her my own personal family’s struggle when they came to the United States and the difference it has made on my life. Gloria says she wants to learn more and that she wants her kids to do well, but would rather not have to participate in any English activities herself. I told her I would see them tomorrow now that we were switching to Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Seventh Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 29th, 2004 from 5:50-8:12pm.

Went Over Homework/Books Read

There is a difference with Jennifer. She is showing more effort and more interest. She is getting excited because she is very close to her 40 books and earning a reward. She has caught up with her work. I handed back both of the girls’ journals and let them know that I enjoyed them and responded to back to them.

Books Read

Jennifer was delighted to let me know she had read more books since yesterday. She read, The Long Way Home, Three, Dora’s Book of Words, A Pony for a Princess, and Jasmine read her About the Rainforest. We discussed all the books and if there were any words that she didn’t understand. She said she like the Dora book because it had words in English and Spanish. We spent a great deal of time discussing the books and the contents. Jennifer also asked to read me the book, A Pony for a Princess. She did great. To see her confidence growing was wonderful.
Seventh Meeting with Jennifer at their home. Met on July 29th, 2004 from 5:50-8:12pm. CONTINUED

Flash Cards

She had been expressing how she is enjoying reading, so I made sure to bring numerous books for her to select from.

We lost track of time before we got to the flash cards. Jennifer was able to add a few more words to her list of known words, two, would, and broom. She was very proud. She recognized more words, but didn’t use them in sentences today. I am noticing a positive difference in using two days back to back and in Jennifer’s efforts. I think she is realizing that I care about her and her education.

Homework Assignments

I let the girls know that there was a reason for me bringing so many books today. I wanted them to write in their journals and asked them if they were having trouble coming up with ideas. They said they wanted topics to write about. I gave them the following choices:
1. What is your favorite sense to use and why?
2. If you were granted three wishes what would you wish for and why?
3. What is your favorite color and why?
4. Write about anything else you choose.

I then told them that I was going to have them work on their first real book report. I asked them if either one of them had ever written book report before. I was shocked that they both said NO. When I told them they were going to do one, they were both actually very excited about it. I told them they could use any book that I brought, or any one they have read before. I gave Jasmine more puzzles because she loves them and asked for more. Jennifer enjoys more random discussions to guide our lessons, so most puzzles are for Jasmine.

Homework Summary:
Journal Entries, Book report, and Read!

Spoke to Mom

I let Gloria know that Jennifer is doing much better. I also let her know about Jennifer’s homework.
Eighth Session with Jennifer at their home. Met on August 4th, 2004 from 6:10pm to 8:30pm

Books Read/Homework Completed!

Jennifer completed her journal. She was so excited to hand it to me saying “I did it, I did it!” We went over books that she had read. Her vocabulary is building and her pronunciation is improving. A lot of time was spent on summarizing the books for comprehension and vocabulary content.

Jennifer said she ran out of time to finish her book report, and I told her that it had to be done by tomorrow. I was very disappointed, because she had been doing so well. Jennifer continues to pick and choose what to do when she chooses to do them.

Jasmine completed all of her work and book report. She did her report on The Witch Who Was Afraid of Witches. I believe that her comprehension is growing. I believe she can handle much harder work, but doesn’t want the work to be challenging. I will continue to slowly push her to read more difficult books.

Comprehension/Summarization

I had Jasmine explain her book to us. They have to explain who the author and illustrators are, where to find the information, the main characters, the problems, and solutions of the story. They both express that they feel smarter knowing parts of print and contents of print.

Explanation of Future Expectations

I told them that I know what they can both do, and I expect them to do better each time we meet. I also threw some questions about their books and said that they might want to include that information in the book reports. I told them to try to fill all the lines, that there is always more to share.

Homework!

I told the girls that they have the night off from journals, so I could respond to them. I reminded Jennifer that her book report must be completed tomorrow. The only other thing I wanted was for the girls to read and work on their flash cards.

Talked to Mom

I first let her know that Jennifer finished her journal and has read a great deal of books. I let her know that Jennifer is improving. Then I let her know that Jennifer didn’t complete her book report. Gloria stated that
Eighth Session with Jennifer at their home. Met on August 4th, 2004 from 6:10pm to 8:30pm CONTINUED

Ninth Session with Jennifer. Met at their house on August 5th, 2004. We met from 5:55pm to 8:05pm

Went Over Work

I gave the girls back their journals and let them know that I responded in them. Jennifer handed me her book report. She did her report on I Hate My Bow. She said the book was very funny and that she liked it. She did well with comprehension and her description of the story. Jennifer needs to learn to slow down when she works and to use a pencil when she writes. When she read her report she found that she spelled a word incorrectly and caught it, which was great. She is also very excited because she thinks she has 40 books to get her reward.

Went Over Books Read

She did it! She was so happy; she read 40 books. Jennifer read 5 books last night just to get there. The books she selected were fairly easy for her to read and great for helping her with her fluency.

Completion of Charts

Jennifer was so proud of herself. She filled in her last stickers. I am seeing incredible growth in Jennifer. She is slowly progressing to higher level books of difficulty. Jasmine is almost done with her charts as well.

Set Up reward

Jennifer’s mother heard how excited we all were outside and came out to see what was going on. I spoke to her and decided that if it was alright with her, I would take Jennifer and Jasmine for a day. We would go and purchase their new books and then spend the day out at my house in Milford. Our town was having a festival, and I thought it would be a special treat for these two girls. Gloria thought it would be a great treat for the girls, and the girls were so excited.

she doesn’t understand what is happening and that she has been driving home during her lunch periods to check on the kids. Jennifer has been telling her that all her work was done.
Ninth Session with Jennifer.  
Met at their house on August 5th 2004. We met from 5:55pm to 8:05pm
CONTINUED

Books Read Today
Jennifer wanted to read to me today. She read me *Best Dad in the Sea Nemo!* She did great! Jasmine read us one of Jamie Lee Curtis’s books called *Where Do Balloons Go?* Then Jennifer and I alternated pages reading *I’m Gonna Like Me.* She seemed to really enjoy the story and thought it was a little silly. Then the two girls read alternating pages *Silly Sally.* They loved it. We then worked on a phonemic book called *Vets* that focused on the “V” sound. I noticed that whenever the girls see a “V,” they pronounce it as they would in Spanish, which sounds like a “B” sound. The two of them are working on it, and both expressed that this was a difficult sound for them.

Flash Cards
The girls spent so much time reading today that we didn’t have a lot of time for the flash cards. Jennifer added two more words to her chart. They are zoom and weather. Jennifer’s hardest obstacle is to use words correctly in sentences.

Homework
The girls have another book report for next week. They need to continue to write in their journals, and I have left many books for them to choose from. I have left more difficult books for Jasmine.

Let’s Make a Deal
I spoke to Gloria to let her know of the special terms the girls need to meet in order to go to the festival. They must have all work completed, ALL WORK! The girls understand that if one of them doesn’t have their work done, only one will go to the festival.

Phone Call In the Middle Of the Week
Jennifer called on Monday. She wanted to verify what she had to have done.
10th session with Jennifer.
Met at their house on Wednesday August 11th, 2004. Met from 6-8:40pm.

Went Over Homework/Books Read

Jennifer handed me her journal filled and completed. She was eager to share all the books she read. Jasmine also had all her work completed.

I began with asking for the book reports. Jasmine had hers completed and did her report on *Vampires Don’t Wear Polka Dots*, part of the Bailey School series. Jasmine has shown an interest in the supernatural. She loved the books on witches and enjoyed the story about vampires.

Then I asked Jennifer for her report. She asked me what book report I was talking about. So we had a discussion about her report and her responsibilities. She tried to say that she didn’t understand, and then that she lost it, and then that she forgot. I reminded her that she called me to ask about her work. I told her that we would talk to her mom, but that she would not be able to attend on Saturday.

Books Read for Homework

We went over reading. Jasmine has stepped up to more difficult books for herself, and it is taking her longer time to complete books. Jennifer is finding Clifford to be very easy for her. She also read, *A Bad, Bad Day, I Lost My Tooth, and The Show and Tell Surprise*. Jennifer is now going over books with ease.

Books Read Today

Jennifer read with me *The Little Old Lady Who was Not Afraid of Anything*. She had trouble with some expressions, but overall did well and enjoyed the book.

I introduced the girls to some of my favorite books. We alternated reading *Strega Nona*. Jennifer needs assistance in reading. Then I wanted to begin to expose the girls to idioms, so we ventured into Amelia Bedelia books. We read the books slowly and did a lot of discussions about characters, story line, and expressions. I wanted to make sure that the girls understood that the things that Amelia did in the book were all literal and wrong. Both of the girls asked a lot of questions. They both responded that they liked the books, because they felt they were learning more.

Mom Came Home

Gloria came home, and I had Jennifer tell her mother about not having her report done. Jennifer was absent for some
10th session with Jennifer. Met at their house on Wednesday August 11th, 2004. Met from 6-8:40pm. 
CONTINUED

Flash Cards

Homework Assigned

A LIGHT OF HOPE!

11th session with Jennifer. Met with them at their home on August 12th, 2004. We met from 5:40 until 8:20pm.

Went Over Work Done/Books Read

time as she discussed the situation with her mother and came out crying.

Time was shortened again. Jennifer still managed to add more words to her list. She added peddler and shake.

I told the girls no journals because it is my night to respond to them. Jennifer had to complete her report, so I gave her a new copy, to be done by tomorrow. The only thing to work on tonight was reading and flashcards.

As I came home and began to go over the girls’ work I found something. Jennifer had completed one of the two reports she was supposed to have done and turned in. She said she didn’t remember doing them or seeing them, but here was one. She did it on A Pony for a Princess. However, she didn’t finish one part of it and said that she forgot what it meant. She didn’t ask anyone for help. I now know that Jennifer will never ask for help. I am planning on making a deal with Jennifer’s mom. Because Jennifer completed almost all of her work, and if she has the reports done tomorrow, I want to give her a second chance. If she has her work done tomorrow and one extra report done by Saturday morning, I will let her come to the festival. These kids spend everyday insides, all day long, by themselves; they deserve to have a special day.

I gave the girls back their journals. They are both improving and getting more comfortable writing. They are both using more vocabulary when they write. Before I could ask Jennifer if she had her reports done she handed me everything completed. She did her report on Biscuit Goes to School. She completed all parts and displayed complete comprehension of the story. Then she did another character’s sheet, because she didn’t know she
11th session with Jennifer. Met with them at their home on August 12th, 2004. We met from 5:40 until 8:20pm.
CONTINUED

Books Read Overnight and Today!

Jennifer even read overnight. She read *Sid and Sam* and *Biscuit Goes to School*. She said she had trouble reading *Sid and Sam* because of all of the rhyming words.

Today we read a lot! Jennifer read to me today. She read *The Pumpkin Patch* and *I’ll Teach My Dog 100 Words*. Then I read to her, *Thank You, Amelia Bedelia, Amelia Bedelia and The Surprise Shower*. Jennifer loves Amelia. She asked to borrow the books to read again herself, which is great to see. Then Jennifer and I read together. We read *I Like Me*! Again, Jennifer is showing so much growth and progress. I have been leaving her some Arthur books for her to read as well. I know that they are more difficult, but feel that she is ready for more challenging material. So, today I had her read me the first page on one of the Arthur books, and she read it with no difficulty. She was surprised and happy to see she could do it.

Flash Cards

It has been awhile since we spent good quality time on the flashcards. We continue to read all the words and discuss what they are in order to make words more familiar to her. Today she added the words witch and clues to her list.

Mom Gets Home!

I asked to speak to Gloria alone. We went inside and I showed her how Jennifer had already completed one of the reports and that she misplaced it in her journal and that she had everything else completed for the day. I explained my idea about having the one extra report done to earn the festival back, and she agreed. Gloria and I also discussed her involvement at home and the need to interact in English and give Jennifer validation for the work she is doing. I explained that Jennifer needed to see that English was important to her parents too. When Gloria refuses any English, Jennifer sees the behavior and then copies her mother. Gloria agreed that she need to be more supportive and would try more. She admitted that they do not do any English in the evenings.

We called the girls in and explained to Jennifer what I found and what she had to do to earn the festival back. She had already done one. She did this character report on *Amelia Bedelia*. She is still displaying sound spelling in Spanish, and I am trying to build her phonemic awareness.
11th session with Jennifer. Met with them at their home on August 12th, 2004. We met from 5:40 until 8:20 pm. CONTINUED

Homework Assignments

Saturday August 14th, 2004.
FESTIVAL DAY

I got to their home with Jennifer holding out her report. She did her report on Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear. It was all done! I set up to bring the girls The 2 girls had never been inside a bookstore before; I was surprised. They were so amazed. The experience of taking them to the bookstore was rewarding enough. Jennifer picked out Little Witch Goes to School (Level 3 book). Jasmine picked out Peter Pan and Witch Wishes. (Jasmine earned 2 books. She has even read the 1st Harry Potter). The girls were so amazed by the festival in Milford. They said they had never been to a festival like it. I got their faces painted, and they bought marshmallow shooters. After the festival, I brought the girls by my home, so they could see the lake. They loved it. They began looking for shells and playing in the sand. They asked to have lunch outside by the water. We left at around 3 pm, and both of the girls didn’t want to go.

NO ONE HOME!

When I took the girls home, there was no one there! No one came home until 4:45 pm. Gloria said that she told the girls to call before we left my home, but that was not our arrangement. The day went great, but the lack of commitment from mom gets difficult.

The girls weren’t happy about getting more homework. I told them to continue to write in their journals and read more books. They also received their book reports to be completed for next week. Jennifer knows that she now has two to do. Both of the girls are excited about Saturday.

was so excited. She said she will have her report done on Saturday morning.
12th session. Met at their home on August 19th, 2004 from 5:55pm to 7:45pm.

Went Over Homework & Books Read

Both of the girls finished their book reports. Jennifer did her report on *Strega Nona*, and Jasmine did her report on *Witch’s Wishes*. Both of the girls talked about their reports.

All the girls want to do is READ!

For the first time ever both of the girls had the reports done at the same time. It was great to see. Jennifer pointed out that she read 2 books over the weekend. She read *Biscuit Goes to School* and *Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear?*. Jennifer is feeling some great accomplishments right now. I am so proud of her. Both of the girls handed me their journals as well.

I don’t know what has happened, but what a wonderful change! All they both want to do is read. Jennifer wanted to read *The Case of Scaredy Cats*. The book took some time to read because of pausing to explain parts of the story for her. Next we moved on to *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do you See?*, which Jasmine read. Then Jennifer read, *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do you Hear?* And I read them *Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do you See?* Then, we discussed the three books and why the book I read was different. We talked about endangered animals and what they were and what makes them endangered.

The girls were enjoying Eric Carle and wanted to continue with his books. They alternated pages on *The Secret Birthday Message*. Jasmine read *Does a Kangaroo Have a Mother Too?* Jennifer and I read *The Mixed Up Chameleon*. The girls have been having such a great time with reading.

Flashcard Time

We revisited some old cards and new ones today. Jennifer got all the old ones, but had trouble with the new ones. Jennifer is learning more through the conversations we have about the words on the cards. Her skills are building, and she is still progressing well.

Homework!

The girls are excited! Homework: read a new book!
13th session. We met at their home on August 20th, 2004 from 5:50pm to 8:35pm

Go Over Homework & Books Read

I handed the girls their journals. I told Jasmine that I would like to see her write more in her journal than do word puzzles. Jennifer is improving more each day. She has a lot of drawings in her journal. So, I suggested to her to write a sentence or two explaining the pictures that she is drawing. Jennifer was very excited to tell me about her new book, and another book that she read. She read *Bubble Bubble* and *Little Witch Goes to School*. The new book is a level 3 read, geared for grades 1-3. Jennifer was so proud of herself to read it. Jasmine chose to read us *Chrysanthemum*. Both of the girls loved the story. I am trying to teach the girls to be happy with whom they are and be proud of who they are.

HUMBLING & HEARTWARMING

Jennifer’s father came home. He always says hello in Spanish and then goes inside. Today he popped out his head 3 times before he interrupted. He needed help, but didn’t know how to ask me. Finally, I asked if he needed anything or wanted to sit in and listen. He said, if it wasn’t too much trouble, could I help him fill out a rental application for the trailer park? They were having trouble translating the information. So Jennifer read her story to us as I aided her father in filling out his paper work. I know that it took a lot to ask me for help. I can remember helping my own parents to do the same type of things. It is very rewarding to make a difference, and I know that the help was greatly appreciated.

Then, Gloria started to ask if I could check on something for them. They couldn’t figure out when school started, or when the buses would come for the kids. They hadn’t received anything from the schools yet. I told her I would call ASAP.

Flash Cards

Jennifer is doing great! She can read almost all the cards, but still doesn’t know what they all are. So we continue with our discussions and conversations about the words and using them in sentences.
13th session. We met at their home on August 20th, 2004 from 5:50pm to 8:35pm CONTINUED

Time Cut b/c of Aiding/ Homework is Assigned

I told the girls to write in their journals and read more books. As a continued tradition, they have a book report to do for next week. I told them both that I am very proud of their hard work. I have high hopes for their growth and success.

I have also started Jennifer on some phonics worksheets to build on her phonemic awareness. She thought they looked fun--like games--and was excited about them.

SOLVED THE PROBLEMS
Monday August 23rd & Tuesday August 24th

Wednesday, August 25, 2004

After many phone calls and hours on the phone, the problem was discovered. The family had moved into the trailer park at the end of June. Since the move, they were placed in a different school zone. The family lived in Ypsilanti, but was now in a school zone for Ann Arbor schools. I got the names of all three schools for the 3 children. Gloria was very upset when I told her what the problem was. She began to cry and said she didn’t know what to do or how to do it. I made more calls and arranged to have all three children registered. Gloria asked if I could go with her to help translate for her. So tomorrow we are registering Jennifer and Jasmine.

Today we started by going to Jasmine’s school first. It took 1 1/2 hours. Jasmine was entering middle school. The school was very nice, and the ladies in the office were very helpful. I translated and helped Gloria fill out the paperwork. In between I was explaining to Jasmine how electives worked and how to select them. We marked things that she was interested in, and the ladies said they would do their best to get her in those classes. Jasmine showed a lot of interests. She wanted to learn about rockets, space, and foreign language. She wanted to take Spanish, I told her that was cheating! We made sure that she would have an ESL instructor. The highlight for Jasmine was getting to join the choir!
In between, I brought books for Jennifer to read. She and her brother, Albin, looked at those and kept busy with them.

Jennifer was very scared about another school. The last school was awful for her, and she didn’t think this would be any different. The school was amazing.

When we arrived there was a warm welcome for the family. We filled out the paperwork and received great information for the family. This school will send flyers and newsletters home in Spanish. Gloria was very happy to hear this. She even said she might consider joining the PTO. We had a chance to meet with Jennifer’s ESL instructor. He was very nice. He spoke in Spanish for a few minutes and let Jennifer look around the room. She was very happy. His Spanish was a little rough, but he understood everything, which was great. Jennifer ended the visit by saying that she wished classes started today. Things are starting to pick up for this family.

When we got back to their home we did some work for a while. We read the book *The Spider and the Fly*. Jennifer didn’t like the book because the spider ate the fly. Then we switched gears and covered some flashcards. Jennifer did awesome; she got so many words.

Today I had a surprise for Jennifer. Her birthday is tomorrow so I baked her a cake. She had never had a homemade cake before, which again I thought was odd. I also got her two new books. I dropped off the cake and presents at her house, picked up her brother, Albin, and met her mother and the girls at Jasmine’s school. We picked up Jasmine’s schedule and locker information. We walked through the school to see where all her classes were.

Then, we were off to register Albin into high school. The school was enormous. We began by filling out more paperwork. However, the lady in the office who was entering all the information was not pleasant at all. In fact, she was very rude at first. She was complaining about us to another woman in front of us. I cut in and excused myself. But we
Thursday, August 26th, 2004
CONTINUED

Back To Celebrate & Work

weren’t there to cause any problems. I explained what had happened to the family and that is why I called and had an appointment. If there were a problem, perhaps we should talk to the principal. She immediately changed her tone. I think she didn’t realize that I spoke English, because when we got there I was speaking only Spanish for the family. It was very shocking to see the difference in her once I spoke in English.

After we enrolled him, we met with Albin’s new school counselor. She was wonderful. We evaluated where Albin was and what classes he needed. He expressed concern that his Algebra was bad and that he had been having a lot of trouble. The counselor arranged for him to have an extra class, called PASS, which will aid him with his Algebra. He will also have two ESL courses to bring him up to 9th grade pace. His English had progressed the slowest out of the three kids. I feel part of it is because he is so shy. He will also get a computer design class because of his interest in computers. He would like to join the soccer team and is nervous and scared about a new school.

Jennifer was so excited to celebrate her birthday. We sang happy birthday in English and Spanish. It was great. We read and went over some of the books Jennifer had been reading. I knew though that she was too excited to read and work. I brought my kids with me today, so I let them all play together.

All three kids were ready to start school on August 31st. I let them know that I was beginning my own classes and that I could now only meet on Thursdays. I would come right when Albin got home from school, work with him, and then the girls, once they got home from school.

When I got to the house, Albin was waiting. We sat down and talked about school. Albin has more difficulty speaking in English, and I find him speaking more Spanish than English. He said he got lost his first day, but that he made it. He is enjoying the new school. He says both of his ESL teachers do not speak Spanish very well. However, he said that they do speak slowly for him and have been trying to help him a lot. He said that the only one class he was

Any Problems?

Met with 3 kids from 3:20 to 5:25pm.

Met with 3 kids from 3:20 to 5:25pm. CONTINUED

having any trouble in was Algebra. He says that the work part of it isn’t difficult; it’s the translating of the directions for him to understand. So, we went over his Algebra for a short time until the girls got home.

Jasmine

She came home from school feeling sick. She got a nose bleed at school and then her stomach felt sick. She said she liked her new school. She is having trouble with math at school. We went through it together, but I am very concerned. She had trouble with all of it. There wasn’t any of it that looked familiar or easy to understand. I spoke to Gloria about it when she got home, but she felt that Jasmine just need to work harder.

Jennifer Gets Home From School

What a difference. She was all smiles. She was so happy to see me and tell me all about her new school. Two of her new friends live across the street in some apartments, so she is excited. She said school is great, and she is doing wonderful at reading. The teachers have her working on a chapter book. WOW! At the beginning of the summer she was at a first grade reading level, now chapter books! Then she showed my her multiplication that she is working on and a newsletter from school. I let Gloria know that I would let the school know that the letters should come home in Spanish.

Jennifer asked to read with me. She is just one book away from have 80 books read. By our next meeting, she will have met her mark!

OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS

My summer of working with Jennifer was over, but I continued to stay close with them. I came once or twice a week to check on their school progress. Jennifer had some difficulty with books coming home in Spanish, and mom only wanted English. We talked with the school. The school was even great about getting a tutor to work with Jennifer every Thursday who was bilingual.

I helped set up conferences for the parents and would call the school when needed for Gloria. I also had two Xerox boxes full of books donated to the three kids. I knew that they didn’t have any real books of their own, and they were excited.

I also knew that they didn’t have much furniture when they moved in and had some tables, shelves, and shelving units donated to the family to help them get by.
Over the holidays that would come, I helped the kids set up and decorate for Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. We would do reading and writing activities that evolved around the holidays. When Christmas came, I donated two boxes of ornaments, and a small tree for the family to put up.

I continued to help them with school work when needed. Jennifer also wrote and illustrated a few books over the next few months.

I had a chance to speak to Gloria and get her feelings about what took place over the summer. Tears came to her eyes when she started to speak. She talked about how much it has helped her entire family. She still feels that learning is something that should be done at school, because she didn’t get much of an education herself. She says she doesn’t have the time to work with the kids and their homework when they get home. She says after working two jobs, when she gets home she would like to sit and enjoy her soap shows.

She felt that teachers needed to do more to work with her kids and that it was the school’s job to help them. She feels that my working with Jennifer over the summer has been a blessing for her family. She wishes that I could keep working with the kids, but understands that I have school to finish too, along with a family to raise and care for.

She did feel that my knowing and being bilingual helped the family communicate and work towards improving the children’s education. She said that she would recommend the program and the experience to any foreign family that would like to see their children succeed.
CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

Based on the review of literature and my case study, I have learned that there is a great deal that we need to understand about bilingual students and family literacy. To this date, not enough studies have been conducted on bilingual students and the family literacy experiences that take place.

According to research, there are many steps that need to be taken in order to make a difference with bilingual students. The difference can and should begin with the classroom teacher. As a teacher, I feel that the number one priority should be to reach the needs of all students. There are many simple and basic steps that can be made. Making a few accommodations can improve and facilitate a more successful education for everyone involved. In the following sections, useful accommodations are presented for use within general education classrooms. As stated previously, it is important to understand that the ideas and accommodations made for bilingual students are accommodations that can benefit all students (Allington & Cunningham, 1999).

Awareness

Teachers must first be aware of the students that are entering into their classrooms. For example, they need to know their students’ background, family history, ethnicity, cultural traditions, or cultural heritage.

Awareness can become a valuable teaching tool by providing an understanding of students. For example, in some cultures it is considered disrespectful to look a person in the face. Teachers might think that students are being disrespectful if they don’t look at someone when they speak. Teachers need to remember that students bring different stories and life experiences
to the classroom. This awareness can also be used as a way to teach about different cultures or ways of life.

**Communication**

General education teachers need to communicate with families as much as possible. Even though teachers may feel apprehensive about communicating with a family because of language barriers, they do not need to feel that way at all. In some schools, translators are made available whenever needed. If a translator is not available, perhaps the student could serve as a translator between the family and school during a conference. Teachers can also attempt to translate a letter using online sources. A bilingual student’s family would much rather know that you acknowledge them as a vital and important part of their child’s education. Ignoring them or avoiding contact because of a language barrier only creates barriers to communication. If letters appear to be too difficult, then teachers may prefer a conference would better benefit those involved.

It is vital to let the families of all students, including bilingual students, know that they are welcomed into the school and classroom. Invite the families into the classroom. Encourage families to share and teach the class about their culture. If the parents can not speak the language, the student can translate for their family. It becomes validating for the student to be acknowledged. Once they are acknowledged, they begin to achieve and contribute to the class. This also shows families that they are a valuable asset to their children’s education.

Communication with all families should be ongoing. Learning about different life styles and experiences can become building blocks for teaching and learning within the classroom. Everyone can benefit from listening and learning to our students and their families.
Other features that all teachers should include in their classrooms are visual aids. Visual aids can benefit all students, but for bilingual students they can make the world of difference. Using visuals in a classroom provides more language opportunities for bilingual students and makes more connections to material that is being covered in class. Since all students learn differently, visual aids are another way to meet the needs of all students while reaching bilingual students.

Visual aids can be used in many forms. A classroom can be labeled in the languages that are represented in the class. For example, a door may be labeled in English and Spanish. If labeling a classroom, teachers can color code the labeling by labeling one language in one color and English in a second color. Labeling a classroom can also benefit all students. ELL students will acquire English; English native speakers acquire a new language.

Another format to use visuals in the classroom is during instruction for the purpose of simplifying information. For example, one might use counters for number representation in mathematics, or use visuals to demonstrate grammar structures in Language Arts. The use of visuals in core subjects will enhance learning for all students and help to keep students engaged in learning. Another form of visuals can be puppets to act out stories or for students to demonstrate understanding of material. The visuals can further serve as a hands-on learning tool, as well as a comprehension assessment tool for teachers.

In order to give the best support to bilingual students in the classroom it is best to use a variety of strategies to maximize learning opportunities. Shared reading is a useful strategy for bilingual students. During shared reading, bilingual students can learn to use reading strategies
to aid in his or her reading. Depending on the level of the reader, shared reading further offers support for all levels of students. The buddy reading is providing another language experience for both students. For bilingual students, they can be paired up with younger or weaker readers and be successful. This provides the bilingual student with self esteem, fluency and success in reading. A story that can be used to demonstrate the simplicity and fun of using Readers Theater might be the story, the *Three Billy Goat’s Gruff*. Students can personally interpret each of the goats and what they would say and how they would say it. Using a variety of strategies will also help teachers discover what works for the students and what strategies will best meet their needs.

**Writing Support**

Written expression can be very difficult for bilingual students active in the beginning. However, much like reading supports, it is important to remember to use various strategies to reach the student. For example, teachers need to encourage the students to write, even if it is in their primary or native language. The teacher can later encourage the student to begin to translate their writing or parts of their writing. Teachers need to also encourage them to share their writing. If their writing is in their primary language, perhaps they can retell their writing in English for the class. This allows the students’ voice to still be heard while developing their own written expression. It is also important to encourage the student to publish or write for meaning. The more the students write, the more they will experience. Gradually, they will be willing to translate or attempt to write in English.

The LEA approach is very effective in working with bilingual students. It can demonstrate how verbal language is represented in written language. Using LEA can provide the bilingual students with a voice that might not be heard otherwise. It is a wonderful teaching tool for teachers to model writing for students. LEA can then be transitioned into interactive writing,
where the bilingual student can slowly become active in the writing process alongside the teacher. At the same time, he/she can learn important writing strategies to become a successful writer.

Students can interactively write together too, much like buddy reading. For example, students can be paired up with one strong and weaker writer. The stronger writer models and encourages the weaker writer to do better. Paired writing can be as easy as having students taking turns in writing sentences or paragraphs. A weak writer can also be paired with younger students to promote and encourage their own writing success as well. The two students can create stories and writing pieces together. Many students have fun creating stories in groups and sharing them with their class.

Multicultural Experience

It is vital for all classrooms to experience multicultural understanding and awareness. Using multicultural literature within a classroom shows students how they are connected with one another (Norton, 1990). Multicultural literature can teach students that they all experience desires, needs, and emotions and that these things should bring people closer together. Using multicultural literature helps students to understand and appreciate the differences among people. Students need to learn that the differences that are seen between various cultures are what enrich our schools and societies (Norton, 1990; Tompkins, 2004). The use of multicultural literature in the classroom brings about an awareness of other cultures and enhances the learning for all students (Drucker 2003). Multiculturalism also demonstrates acceptance of other cultures and differences, which in turn shows acceptance of all students (Norton, 1990; Tompkins, 2004). Showing acceptance of all cultures and demonstrating awareness within the classroom will
reduce bullying that is more often brought on by fear and being unaware of others and their differences.
CONCLUSION

There is still much to be learned about family literacy and bilingual students. We need to understand how bilingual students develop literacy in the United States, what challenges they face, and what educators need to do to help them succeed. Future studies need to examine what can be done to improve these students’ learning within their classrooms.

What we do know is that there are many things that general education teachers can do to improve the learning environment of all the students within a classroom. As educators, we need to be more aware of what experiences all of our students bring to the classroom, how past or family experiences may affect experiences within the classroom, and what experiences in the classroom can help all students learn and grow.

It is also important for educators to reach out and communicate with bilingual families and to limit language barriers that hinder communication. Family involvement within student’s educations should be advocated for all students. Lastly, the use of multicultural literature within a classroom promotes awareness of other cultures, differences, and encourages acceptance and understanding of those differences.

Educators are not left without means to support bilingual students. By achieving awareness and making accommodations to meet the needs of all our students, including bilingual students, teachers can facilitate literacy learning. In the end, if teachers can discover ways to promote learning of all students, see past language barriers, and do what they set out to do—teach and meet the needs of all the students who walk in the door, then we can ensure the future of education and literacy in the United States.
Appendix
PERSONAL HOME LITERACY EXPERIENCE

With the exception to myself, who was born in the United States, my entire family was born in Spain. My family came to the United States in 1975. My oldest brother was five, and my other brother was three. My father had very limited English, and my mother spoke no English at all. They moved to Detroit because my father’s brother and his family were already living in Detroit. My father had the equivalence of a high school education, but my mother did not complete elementary school.

My oldest brother, Jose, learned how to read and write in Spanish at the age of three. With the help of my uncle, my parents enrolled my oldest brother, Jose into kindergarten. After about three months of attending school, my parents realized that something terrible was going on at school and started asking questions. My brother continuously reported that he didn’t get to participate in school and that the teacher made him sit in the corner day after day. My parents found out that the teacher placed my brother in the back of the room, because he was not speaking English. So, my mother decided to go to the school, regardless of the language barrier and see for herself what was going on. She went in with my brothers, Jose and David, who were three, and sat in the back of the classroom. She attended the school for the remaining three months of school to make sure that my brother was not excluded from the class.

When I was born, Spanish was my first language. However, while growing up in Detroit, I was able to learn English as well, because my friends in our neighborhood spoke English. My parents weren’t aware that I was able to speak English until my grandparents came for a visit from Spain. My grandmother was a talker and would stop to talk to anyone she met, however, she only spoke Spanish. So, at the young age of three, I was translating for my grandmother. It felt good to be able to help my grandmother. I then began helping and translating for my mother.
at grocery stores and outings. We then moved to Spain for a little under a year. When I turned four, we were back in Detroit, but only for a short while.

My parents wanted more for us and moved to a small town called Marysville, Michigan. It was wonderful! We lived two blocks from the library and down the road from the middle school. I remember my family had books in the home, when I was really young, but many of them were in Spanish. Once we moved to Marysville, I would beg my brother David to take me to the library weekly. I was able to get my own library card at age six and would check out as many books as I could weekly. I would drive my brother David crazy until he would read to me.

Reading wasn’t emphasized at home when I was growing up. In fact, I don’t recall my parents ever reading to me. What I do remember is when I was learning to read in first grade, I would bring home the basals from school and read to my mother. I would try to get her to read with me. Around this time, my father decided that we would no longer be able to speak Spanish at home, because he and my mother needed to learn and improve their English skills. I would help my parents read things in English as I grew older. I still, to this day, help my father with his writing or translations from time to time. While I was growing up, my desire to help my parents be successful, as well as the fulfillment it gave me to assist them in learning drove my home literacy experiences.

As I grew older, my father realized that the decision to eliminate Spanish completely from our home was a mistake. He decided that we would spend one to two hours a night learning and speaking Spanish at home. By this time, I had lost a great deal of my Spanish and my brother David refused to attempt to learn. I remember night after night my father drilling us and trying to bring the Spanish back in the home. My parents continued from that time on speaking in Spanish
at home, but by then, my brothers and I would interpret Spanish as if it were English. It wasn’t until I was much older that I would attempt to regain my bilingualism.

The town in which my brothers and I attended school was predominately Caucasian. In school, we were made fun of because our parents spoke with an accent, or because the food we ate at home was much different from their norm. I also remember my school experiences. I had wonderful teachers throughout my education, but the affirmation of my ethnicity rarely occurred. I had one teacher, my second grade teacher, who reached out to my mother. If she couldn’t understand my mother, I would help. She befriended my mother and welcomed her into our classroom. I remember that she taught and shared many things about Spain with my class.

That year was my most memorable year as a student. It wasn’t because I was a star student or a teachers’ pet. For the first time, my family and my mother were accepted and acknowledged as part of the community. My second grade teacher remained friends with my mother until she passed away in 1997. It was from that year on that I knew I wanted to be a teacher and help others. I realized that it was okay to be different and that I was proud to be Spanish.

For my brothers, I remember their educational experiences to be different. They dealt with the pressure from classmates and our community differently, which increased as they entered high school. They wanted nothing to with being from Spain and refused to speak Spanish at home. At school functions, they would be embarrassed if my mother came because they were afraid of being teased or looking different. I was very young, but remember how badly it made my mother feel and knew that I would never put my mother through the same experiences. Instead, I would beg my mother to come to school for anything and everything. I didn’t care what people thought. I did have peers tease me and at the time it was painful to go through, but I
am proud that I never turned away from my mother or my heritage. I only regret that teachers rarely stepped in and that I felt I was fighting the battle of acceptance alone.

Now I find myself an adult with children of my own. I try to encourage them to learn Spanish and speak Spanish to them frequently. I promote diversity in our home and try to keep my children connected with their heritage. I wish I could go back and change the way my family abandoned our roots to acclimate to a closed off community, but I can’t. What I can do is educate others on what I have experienced and promote acceptance and diversity of all students within my classroom.
I Can’t Speak Their Language: How Can I Help Them Read and Write

The following is a PowerPoint presentation that I made at the 49th annual Michigan Reading Association annual conference, on March 12, 2005. The PowerPoint was also presented at the Undergraduate Symposium XXV, held at Eastern Michigan University, on April 1, 2005 and the Best Practices Conference on March 18, 2006, also held at Eastern Michigan University. The presentation was used to demonstrate what classroom teachers can do to reach the needs of bilingual students in their classroom. The PowerPoint information was gathered from literature reviewed and the case study I conducted during my studies.

During the PowerPoint, I addressed my personal family interest and the case study that I was working on. I then described what difficulties bilingual students and their families face, as well as what difficulties teachers face. I then broke down what tools teachers can use and what tools and strategies I have found to be effective in reaching our bilingual students in our classrooms. The presentation of this PowerPoint provided a learning tool for me to develop professionally as a teacher, as well as help reach and educate other teachers about what can be done to reach the needs of our bilingual students.
I Can't Speak Their Language: How Can I Help Them Read and Write
By Laura Green

My Personal Interest

Quick Facts

For 2000-2001 School Year in Michigan

There were 44,471 students that spoke another language other than English.

The Top Two Languages

19,046 spoke Spanish
9,619 spoke Arabic
**2000-2001 Grade Range**
- 45% in grades K-3
- 47% in grades 4-8

**What are some of the problems or obstacles that bilingual families face?**

**Families Deal With:**
- Language Barriers
- Communication Difficulties
- Family Education
- Resources
- Bullying

**Communication**
- To acquire basic communication skills or conversational fluency:
  - It takes 2-5 years

**Academic Language**
- To achieve:
  - It takes 4-7 years

**Problems Educators Face**
- Communication
- Transitioning
- Support
- Tools
- Lack of Training
- Assessment
What Can We Do?

ELL Students Need Two Things
1. They want to feel that they belong.
2. They want to feel safe and secure.

Belonging
- Works for ALL students.
- Give them a home base or group to belong to in the class and don’t change the base.
- Seat students that have this need near the front of the class.

Safe and Secure
- All students will benefit.
- Assign "buddies" for students.
- Routines that create stability.
- Students need to know what will happen next.

Communication

Communication Solutions
- Label The Room
- Send Letters Home Translated Into Their Language
- Find Resources
- Language Opportunities
- Embrace Diversity
- Zero Tolerance With Bullying
Label Examples

La Puerta
Door

Support Language Opportunities
- Provide support using lots of visuals.
  - Reproduce visuals for students
  - Have the students collect visuals
  - Use visuals that will engage the students

Embrace Diversity & Encourage Acceptance

Reading Ideas
- Use wordless books
- Use predictable books
- Concepts of Print
- Choral Reading
- Buddy Reading
Reading Ideas
- Prereading Activities
- Reading Activities
- Postreading Activities
- Vocabulary Building
- Invite family to read

Writing Opportunities

Writing Ideas
- Give Time
- Share Ideas
- Write In Pairs
- Journals
- Translate
- Make Connections
- Children Publish

The I Am Poem

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Web Sites:
- 2000 U. S. Census
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