# Dimensions

## of Early Childhood

Volume 47 • Number 3

Encouraging Global Thinking and Play through Paired Books

Fomentando el Pensamiento Global y el Juego a Través de Libros Emparejados

Effective Inclusion in Preschool and Early Grades: Setting the Stage

Designing and Implementing Differentiated Learning Opportunities and Experiences

A Kindergarten Teacher's Approach to Writing Instruction with Dual Language Learners

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**Southern Early Childhood Association**

**Editor:** Mari Riojas-Cortez, Ph.D.
Dimensions of Early Childhood

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**Southern Early Childhood Association**
1123 S. University, Ste 255
Little Rock, AR 72204
(501) 221-1648
info@seca.info
www.seca.info

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE **JO CARROLL**

This is a bittersweet President's message for me as it is the last one I will write in my tenure as President of SECA. It has truly been a privilege to serve this organization, which has been important to me for so many years. We had some challenges as a volunteer organization but we have survived and are beginning once again to thrive. We have a new webpage so be sure to check us out at seca.wildapricot.org. Explore the different tabs and state pages. We also have a book coming out soon on infant and toddler social emotional development that was written by Dr. Alice Honig.

Our annual conference is coming up soon in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I am looking forward to the many outstanding events, speakers, and time with fellow early childhood colleagues learning what is new, what is working, and what we can do to make things better in our chosen field. Our keynote speaker is Dr. Pam Schiller who is an expert in the area of brain development. The dates are February 27-29, 2020 at the Tulsa Hyatt Regency.

Debbie Ferguson will be taking over as president of SECA on January 1, 2020. She is an organized and passionate person about the field of Early Childhood and equally as important she is passionate about SECA. Please welcome her on board and reach out to her with your willingness to volunteer, ask questions, support her efforts and be an active SECA member.

This issue of *Dimensions* is addressing a wide array of topics including inclusion, literacy, differentiated learning, and one specifically for kindergarten teachers and the challenges they face with what is mandated versus what is best for the young child. Please let us know how this issue impacts you in your work with young children. How will you take what you learn and apply that knowledge to what and how you impact the young children in your care?

Thank you again for the honor of serving this organization. Please know that I may be stepping down as president, but I will always be working on ways to make this organization even more vital and useful as a professional organization that strives to meet the needs of its members.

**SECA**
**Annual**
**Conference**
Tulsa, Oklahoma
February 27-29, 2020
SECA.wildapricot.org for details

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF**

*Pilar Campoy Coronado*
*by Pam Schiller*

*Emily Williamson*
*by Jo Carroll*

## EDITOR'S NOTES **MARI RIOJAS-CORTEZ**

Early childhood teachers are powerful. They have the power to get children excited and motivated to learn. They have the power to engage children in reading and writing. They have the power to guide children in the development of empathy skills. They have the power to create appropriate and inclusive environments for children of all abilities. They have the power to give space to voices of parents. They have the power to collaborate with each other and administrators.

If this power resonates with you, then you are an intentional, caring, devoted early childhood teacher. In this issue of *Dimensions*, we include articles that show the power of early childhood teachers, a power that makes a difference in children's learning.

Los maestros de la primera infancia son poderosos. Tienen el poder de entusiasmar y motivar a los niños a aprender. Tienen el poder de involucrar a los niños en la lectura y la escritura. Tienen el poder de guiar a los niños en el desarrollo de habilidades de empatía. Tienen el poder de crear entornos apropiados e inclusivos para niños de todas las habilidades. Tienen el poder de dar espacio a las voces de los padres. Tienen el poder de colaborar entre sí y con los administradores.

Si este poder resuena contigo, entonces eres un maestro intencional, atento y dedicado de la primera infancia. En este número de *Dimensions*, incluimos artículos que muestran el poder de los maestros de la primera infancia, un poder que marca la diferencia en el aprendizaje de los niños.

# Encouraging Global Thinking and Play through Paired Books

**By Maria Acevedo-Aquino**

This article provides examples of different types of paired books that work well with young children, along with the ways in which these paired books were shared with young children in this preschool classroom. It also describes play-based experiences that invite global explorations, and positions play as a response strategy to encourage children to go beyond themselves and their current worldviews.

After listening to Onyefulu's *New Shoes for Helen* (2010a) and *Omer's Favorite Place* (2010b), a group of four- and five-year-old children were curious about new places. Christian and Russell went to the cloth world map and utilized a cardboard airplane and string to explore different areas on the map. Christian said, "I wonder how they look like in here" (while pointing to Russia), a place whose size captured children's attention. Julio built an airplane with Legos and explained his intentions of visiting Helen and Omer in Ethiopia.

Explorations of global cultures through book pairings and play can provide opportunities for young children like Christian, Russell, and Julio to explore cultural connections and differences to broaden their conceptual understandings and develop their global and critical thinking (Lehman, Freemna & Scharer, 2010). The play narratives described in this article occurred in a preschool classroom where I was researching the ways in which young children develop intercultural understandings through story, inquiry, and play (Acevedo, 2015). The yearlong research took place in a Reggio Emilia inspired preschool classroom with a strong Latinx representation.

## Paired Books, Intercultural Understanding, and Young Children

According to Ciecierski and Blintz (2016) paired books or reading or listening to a book alongside another book or material, can offer opportunities to:

- Develop conceptual understanding about places, objects, events, themes, issues, and cultural practices.
- Avoid and challenge what Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie (2009) refers to as single stories, stereotypical and narrow notions and understandings.
- Develop languages, especially vocabulary, as readers see similar words across contexts and words in different languages, providing windows into the use of language in other communities.
- Enhance classroom conversation because paired books encourage sharing connections and observations across texts, which supports readers in being more active participants.
- Increase motivation and engagement by fostering a multiple-text mentality, which challenges the single-text mentality often encountered in schools. A multiple-text mentality invites readers/listeners to consider various texts as sources of valuable information and spaces for exploring different perspectives that challenge notions of what constitutes truth.

Paired books with culturally specific global literature support

**Table 1.** Paired books that represent diversity within cultural communities.

| Diversity Within | Book Title & Genre | Summary |
|---|---|---|
| India | *What Should I Make?* (Fiction) | A child plays with dough creating various animal shapes, while his mom prepares chapatti. |
| | *I is for India* (Non-Fiction) | Concept book that walks the reader through images of Eastern India. |
| Mexican-American | *We Are Cousins/Somos primos* (Fiction) | A bilingual book that describes the fun activities that take place during a sleepover with all the cousins. |
| | *What Can You Do with a Paleta?* (Fiction) | Two sisters buy paletas and explore creative things they can do with them. |
| Ethiopia | *Omer's Favorite Place* (Non-fiction) | A child describes his house, family members, and favorite spot for playing. |
| | *New Shoes for Helen* (Non-Fiction) | A child buys new shoes at the market for her first wedding. |
| Massai culture | *Papa Do you Love Me?* (Fiction) | The story highlights a father-son relationship while engaging in their daily chores. |
| | *Only the Mountains Do Not Move* (Non-fiction) | This photographical narrative expands on the father-son relationship to include the larger Massai community and experiences |

tions of diversity within cultural communities and diversity across cultural communities. *Table 1* provides examples of paired books that represent diversity within cultural communities. For example, diversity within India was highlighted by pairing a book showing a child's experiences making chapatti (Indian flat bread) in a stone oven, with a book on a broader exploration of cultural artifacts, traditions, and practices from Orissa (Eastern India), such as Bollywood, Diwali, and the art of *Rangoli* (Ananth, 2011). Diversity within Ethiopia was emphasized by pairing two books with urban settings and life styles to challenge stereotypical views of rural African countries. Diversity within cultural communities encouraged children to explore the variety of experiences and stories within a culture to avoid and challenge monolithic views of communities.

children's intercultural understanding by creating spaces to develop local and global knowledge. They also support children in developing and recognizing perspectives, and taking different kinds of action (Acevedo, 2019; Short, Day & Schroeder, 2016; Boix-Mansilla, 2017).

## Paired Books in the Preschool Classroom

Based on my work with young children in this preschool classroom, the types of paired books that best supported young children's explorations of global and local communities were:

- Two books about the same cultural community describing different experiences.
- Two books about the same experience describing different cultural communities.
- One fiction and one non-fiction book around an experience or community.

The later was particularly important because it allowed young readers to make connections to real life characters, settings, and plots, supporting an important curricular objective on the distinction between fantasy and reality.

An example of these connections was evident in children's play after listening to Rumford's *Rain School* (2010) and watching Little Human Planet's video of *Homes Around the World* (2010). Children were curious about the effect of heavy rain and thunder on houses and schools made of clay and big leaves. While Christian was sure that rain could not dissolve their school, Nydia was concerned children in the documentary had houses made out of "big leaves" that looked susceptible to heavy water and wind. To prevent rain damage, Emily and Noah put rocks made from clay on the roof of the school they had constructed from clay.

These three types of paired books supported children's explora-

*Table 2* provides examples of paired books that depict diversity across cultural communities and encouraged explorations of diversity in the world though cultural practices that interested children. For example, as children inquired about family artifacts across cultures, they noticed that different pieces of fabric can have different names (kanga, rebozo, sari) and be used for different purposes, although sometimes also sharing similar purposes. When children listened to stories about school in different countries they noticed that sometimes buildings and uniforms were different, but children had teachers and learned letters, numbers, and songs. Diversity across cultural communities invited children to look at diversity in the world, particularly looking at similar experiences across contexts.

When sharing the paired books with the young children, the reading strategies that most engaged them included:

- Reading the non-fiction book prior to its fictional pair to support children's conceptual understanding with real life representations.
- Integrating a piece of silk to introduce a sari, while sharing Rao and Sabnabi's (2009) *My Mother's Sari* to encourage children to act out different ways of wearing and playing with the piece of fabric.
- Storytelling Rumford's (2010) *Rain School* with Legos, a school made of clay, a spray bottle water, and background thunder and rain sounds to make the story accessible to the preschoolers.
- Watching short documentaries available online about children's and families' houses around the world to provide additional real-life representations, especially of cultural communities that were unfamiliar to the children.

**Table 2. Paired books that depict diversity across cultural communities.**

| Diversity Across | Book Title & Genre | Summary |
|---|---|---|
| Meaningful family artifacts | *My Mother's Sari* (Fiction) | Set in India, a child explores different ways to use her mother's sari. |
| | *What Can You Do with a Rebozo?* (Fiction) | Set in the Mexican-American community, a child explores ways to use her mom's rebozo. |
| Carrying babies | *Carry Me* (Non-fiction) | Set in multiple communities, this photographic board book shows older children and adults carrying babies around the world |
| | *Lala Salama* (Fiction) | Set in Tanzania, a mother carries her son on her back while completing daily chores. |
| The school experience | *Rain School* (Fiction) | Set in Chad, the story describes how children build their school from mud after the monsoon season. |
| | *Deron Goes to Nursery School* (Non-fiction) | Set in Ghana (West Africa), this photographic narrative describes Deron's urban pre-school, including his classroom routines |
| Going to the Market | *New Shoes for Helen* (Non-fiction) | Set in Ethiopia, Helen and her mom go to the market to buy special shoes. |
| | *To Market! To Market!* (Fiction) | Set in India, a child experiences a big market with many people and products. |

- Acting out MacLachlan and Zunon's (2011) *Lala Salama: A Tanzanian Lullaby* with bean bags and blankets for children to pretend to wrap up and carry babies like the characters in the story.

## Responding to Global Paired Books through Play

Children used play as a form of reader response to create meaning from the paired books they read, listened to, and looked at (Flint, 2018). They also experienced play as a space for cultural convergence (Wohlwend, 2013), encouraging them to better understand their own cultures and to explore the richness and diversity within and across the cultures depicted in the literature and the artifacts. Play became a safe space to explore cultural practices, ideas, and ways of being and thinking without real-life consequences.

We developed play-based curricular invitations inspired by the global literature to encourage child-initiated explorations of exciting, favorites and perhaps troubling, written and/or visual messages in the literature (Rowe, 1998; Van Sluys & Reinier, 2006). Effective playful invitations that encouraged thinking and conversation included:

1. Representing school experiences with clay. This invitation included reading out loud *Rain School* (Rumford, 2010) and Onyefulu's (2015) *Deron Goes to Nursery School*, as well looking at pictures of houses and schools in the local neighborhood and in the countries mentioned in the books. This play fostered conversations around construction materials, shapes of the schools, classroom materials, resources, and routines. The children quickly noticed that while they were not required to wear uniforms like Deron, some of their older siblings and caregivers wore uniforms on a daily basis for school and work.
2. Making Indian chapattis and Mexican tortillas with play dough: Children listened to Nayar and Roy's (2009) *What Should I Make?* and Chavarria-Chairez and Vega (2000) *Magda's Tortillas/Las Tortillas de Magda*. They also compared and contrasted photographs of chapattis and tortillas. The process of going back and forth between the illustrations in the book, the photos, and the tridimensional representations with dough supported their search for "the correct" way of making a chapatti; their need for storytelling about family meals and preparation, and; their use of words from global languages to enhance their play. The children insisted that their caregivers knew how to make chapattis, connecting the food to familiar tortillas.
3. Playing in the dramatic play area: This invitation offered different types, sizes, textures, and prints of fabric inspired by books such as *What Can You Do with a Rebozo?* (Tafolla and Córdova, 2008), *Lala Salama* (Maclahlan and Zunon, 2011), *Carry Me* (Grissman, 2009) and Rao and Sabnani's (2009) *My Mother's Sar*i, which provided several pairing opportunities. This time, children's play was characterized by the integration of vocabulary words, like rebozo, kanga, sari, and shawl, as well as moments when the children attributed new meanings to familiar objects, such as transforming a purse into a basket to carry baby dolls on the back, as seen in *Carry Me* (Grissman, 2009).

## Final Thoughts

Explorations of cultural connections are as important as the opportunities to explore what makes each cultural community unique. Paired books enhance these inquiries by encouraging children's expectations for multiple ways of being and doing in the world and for complexity and diversity as strength (Ponciano & Shabazian, 2012). Play as response to paired books supports young children in playing their way into intercultural understanding, as they use their personal connections to make sense of global characters, contexts, and stories during play. Global paired books around diversity across and within cultural communities move children beyond their immediate surroundings to understanding the world. This creates an opportunity for educators to develop learning contexts where young children explore the highly complex, diverse, and everchanging worlds that many are already living beyond the classroom walls.

**María V. Acevedo-Aquino, PhD,** is an assistant professor in the Early Childhood program at Texas A&M-San Antonio. María has worked with early childhood educators and pre-service teachers in understanding young children's intercultural understanding through inquiry, global literature, and play.

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# Fomentando el Pensamiento Global y el Juego a Través de Libros Emparejados

**Por Maria Acevedo Aquino**

Después de escuchar el libro *New Shoes for Helen* (Los Zapatos Nuevos para Helen) y *Omer's Favorite Place* (El Lugar Favorito de Omer) por Onyefulu, (2010a; 2010b), un grupo de niños de cuatro y cinco años sintió curiosidad por aprender más acerca de lugares nuevos. Christian y Russell fueron al mapa mundial de tela y utilizaron un avión de cartón y una cuerda para explorar diferentes áreas en el mapa. Christian dijo: "Me pregunto cómo se verán aquí" (mientras señalaba a Rusia); un lugar cuyo tamaño captó la atención de los niños. Julio construyó un avión con Legos y explicó sus intenciones de visitar a *Helen y Omer* en Etiopía.

Las exploraciones de culturas globales a través de parejas de libros y el juego pueden brindar oportunidades para que los niños pequeños como Christian, Russell y Julio exploren las conexiones culturales y las diferencias para ampliar su comprensión conceptual y desarrollar su pensamiento global y crítico (Lehman, Freemna y Scharer, 2010). Las narraciones del juego descritas en este artículo ocurrieron en una aula preescolar donde estaba investigando las formas en que los niños pequeños desarrollan comprensiones interculturales a través de los cuentos, las preguntas y el juego (Acevedo, 2015). Esta investigación duró por un año y tuvo lugar en una aula preescolar inspirada en el programa infantile de Reggio Emilia con una fuerte representación de Latinx.

Este artículo proporciona ejemplos de diferentes tipos de libros emparejados que funcionan bien con niños pequeños, junto con las formas en que estos libros emparejados se compartieron con niños pequeños en esta aula preescolar. También describe las experiencias basadas en el juego que invitan a exploraciones globales, y postula al juego como una estrategia para alentar a los niños a ir más allá de sí mismos y sus cosmovisiones actuales.

## Los Libros Emparejados, Comprensión Intercultural y los Niños Pequeños

Según Ciecierski y Blintz (2016), los libros emparejados o leer o escuchar un libro junto con otro libro o material, pueden ofrecer oportunidades para:

- Desarrollar una comprensión conceptual sobre lugares, objetos, eventos, temas, problemas y prácticas culturales.
- Evitar y desafíar lo que la autora Nigeriana Chimamanda Adichie (2009) llama historias individuales, nociones y entendimientos estereotipados y estrechos.
- Desarrollar idiomas, especialmente el vocabulario, ya que los lectores ven palabras similares en contextos y palabras en diferentes idiomas, proporcionando ventanas al uso del lenguaje en otras comunidades.
- Mejorar la conversación en el aula porque los libros emparejados fomentan el intercambio de conexiones y observaciones entre textos, lo que ayuda a los lectores a ser participantes más activos.
- Aumentar la motivación y el compromiso fomentando una mentalidad de texto múltiple, que desafía la mentalidad de texto único que a menudo se encuentra en las escuelas. Una mentalidad de texto múltiple invita a los lectores/oyentes a considerar varios textos como fuentes de información valiosa

**Table 1.** Paired books that represent diversity within cultural communities.

| Diversidad interna | Título del libro y género | Género y resumen |
|---|---|---|
| Indio | *What Should I Make?* (Fiction) | Un niño juega con masa creando varias formas de animales, mientras que su madre prepara chapatti. |
| | *I is for India* (Non-Fiction) | Libro conceptual que guía al lector a través de imágenes del este de la India. |
| Mexicano Americano | *We Are Cousins/Somos primos* (Fiction) | Un libro bilingüe que describe las actividades divertidas que tienen lugar durante una pijamada con todos los primos. |
| | *What Can You Do with a Paleta?* (Fiction) | Dos hermanas compran paletas y exploran cosas creativas que pueden hacer con ella. |
| Etiopía | *Omer's Favorite Place* (Non-fiction) | Un niño describe su casa, sus familiares y su lugar favorito para jugar. |
| | *New Shoes for Helen* (Non-Fiction) | Un niño compra zapatos nuevos en el mercado para su primera boda. |
| Cultura Massai | *Papa Do you Love Me?* (Fiction) | La historia destaca una relación padre-hijo mientras se dedican a sus quehaceres diarios. |
| | *Only the Mountains Do Not Move* (Non-fiction) | Esta narrativa fotográfica amplía la relación padre-hijo para incluir a la comunidad y las experiencias de Massai en general. |

Humanas Alrededor del Mundo) por Little Human Planet (2010). Los niños tenían curiosidad sobre el efecto de las fuertes lluvias y los truenos en casas y escuelas hechas de arcilla y hojas grandes. Mientras Christian estaba seguro de que la lluvia no podría disolver su escuela, a Nydia le preocupaba que los niños en el documental tuvieran casas hechas de "hojas grandes" que parecían susceptibles al agua y al viento. Emily y Noah pusieron rocas hechas de arcilla en el techo de la escuela que habían construido con arcilla para evitar daños por lluvia a la escuela y a los estudiantes hechos de arcilla.

Estos tres tipos de libros emparejados apoyaron las exploraciones de diversidad de los niños dentro de las comunidades culturales y la diversidad en las comunidades culturales. ***La Tabla 1*** proporciona ejemplos de libros emparejados que representan la diversidad dentro de las comunidades culturales. Por ejemplo, la diversidad dentro de la India se destacó al combinar un libro que muestra las experiencias de un niño haciendo chapatti (pan plano indio) en un horno de piedra, con un libro sobre una exploración más amplia de artefactos culturales, tradiciones y prácticas de Orissa (India oriental), como Bollywood, Diwali y el arte de Rangoli (Ananth, 2011). La diversidad dentro de Etiopía se enfatizó al combinar dos libros con entornos urbanos y estilos de vida para desafiar las opiniones estereotipadas de los países africanos rurales. La diversidad dentro de las comunidades culturales alentó a los niños a explorar la variedad de experiencias e historias dentro de una cultura para evitar y desafiar los puntos de vista monolíticos de las comunidades.

***La Tabla 2*** proporciona ejemplos de libros emparejados que representan la diversidad en las comunidades culturales y fomentaron la exploración de la diversidad en el mundo a través de prácticas culturales que interesaron a los niños. Por ejemplo, cuando los niños preguntaron acerca de los artefactos familiares en todas las culturas, notaron que diferentes piezas de tela pueden tener diferentes nombres (kanga, rebozo, sari) y usarse para diferentes propósitos, aunque a veces también comparten propósitos similares. Cuando los niños escuchaban historias sobre la escuela en diferentes países, notaron que a veces los edificios y los uniformes eran diferentes, pero los niños tenían maestros y aprendían letras, números y canciones. La diversidad en las comunidades culturales invitó a los niños a mirar la diversidad en el mundo, particularmente mirando experiencias similares en todos los contextos.

y espacios para explorar diferentes perspectivas que desafían las nociones de lo que constituye la verdad.

Los libros combinados con literatura global culturalmente específica apoyan a la comprensión intercultural de los niños al crear espacios para desarrollar el conocimiento local y global. También ayudan a los niños a desarrollar y reconocer perspectivas, y a tomar diferentes tipos de acción (Acevedo, 2019; Short, Day & Schroeder, 2016; Boix-Mansilla, 2017).

## Libros Emparejados en el Aula Preescolar

Basado en mi trabajo con niños pequeños en esta aula preescolar, los tipos de libros emparejados que mejor apoyaron a las exploraciones de niños pequeños de comunidades globales y locales incluyeron:

- Dos libros sobre la misma comunidad cultural que describen diferentes experiencias.
- Dos libros sobre la misma experiencia que describen diferentes comunidades culturales.
- Un libro de ficción y otro de no ficción sobre una experiencia o comunidad.

El último fue particularmente importante porque permitió a los lectores jóvenes hacer conexiones con personajes, escenarios y tramas de la vida real, apoyando un objetivo curricular importante sobre la distinción entre la fantasía y la realidad.

Un ejemplo de estas conexiones fue evidente en el juego de los niños después de escuchar *Rain School* (La Escuela de Lluvia) por Rumford (2010) y ver el video Houses Around the World (Las Casas

**Tabla 2.** Libros emparejados que representan la diversidad en las comunidades culturales.

| Diversidad a través de | Título del libro | Resumen |
|---|---|---|
| Artefactos familiares significativos | *My Mother's Sari* (Fiction) | Ambientada en la India, una niña explora diferentes formas de usar el sari de su madre. |
| | *What Can You Do with a Rebozo?* (Fiction) | Ambientada en la comunidad mexicoamericana, una niña explora formas de usar el rebozo de su madre. |
| Llevar bebes | *Carry Me* (Non-fiction) | Ubicado en múltiples comunidades, este libro de cartón fotográfico muestra a niños mayores y adultos que llevan bebés en todo el mundo. |
| | *Lala Salama* (Fiction) | Ambientada en Tanzania, una madre lleva a su hijo sobre su espalda mientras realiza las tareas diarias. |
| La experiencia escolar | *Rain School* (Fiction) | Ambientada en Chad, la historia describe cómo los niños construyen su escuela de barro después de la temporada del monzón. |
| | *Deron Goes to Nursery School* (Non-fiction) | Ambientada en Ghana (África occidental), esta narrativa fotográfica describe el preescolar urbano de Deron, incluidas son las rutinas de su clase. |
| Yendo al mercado | *New Shoes for Helen* (Non-fiction) | Ambientada en Etiopía, Helen y su madre van al mercado a comprar zapatos especiales. |
| | *To Market! To Market!* (Fiction) | Ambientada en la India, un niño experimenta un gran mercado con muchas personas y productos. |

Al compartir los libros emparejados con los niños pequeños, las estrategias de lectura que más los involucraron incluyeron:

- Leer el libro de no ficción antes de su par ficticio para apoyar la comprensión conceptual de los niños con representaciones de la vida real.
- Integrar una pieza de seda para presentar un sari, mientras se comparte el libro *My Mother's Sari* por Rao y Sabnabi (2009) para alentar a los niños a representar diferentes formas de usar y jugar con la pieza de tela.
- Cuentacuentos con Legos con el libro de *Rain School* por Rumford (2010) con Legos, usando una escuela hecha de arcilla, una botella de spray de agua y sonidos de truenos y lluvia de fondo para que la historia sea accesible para los niños en edad preescolar.
- Ver documentales cortos disponibles en línea sobre las casas de los niños y las familias en todo el mundo para proporcionar representaciones adicionales de la vida real, especialmente de comunidades culturales que no son familiares para los niños.
- Co-actuar con el libro de *Lala Salama: A Tanzanian Lullaby* por MacLachlan y Zuno (2011) con una bolsa de frijoles y mantas para que los niños finjan envolver y llevar a los bebés como los personajes de la historia.

## Responder a Libros Emparejados Globales A Través del Juego

Los niños usaron el juego como una forma de respuesta del lector para crear significado a partir de los libros emparejados que leyeron, escucharon y miraron (Flint, 2018). También experimentaron el juego como un espacio para la convergencia cultural (Wohlwend, 2013), alentándolos a comprender mejor sus propias culturas y a explorar la riqueza y diversidad dentro y a través de las culturas representadas a través de la literatura y los artefactos. El juego se convirtió en un espacio seguro para explorar prácticas culturales, ideas y formas de ser y pensar sin consecuencias en la vida real.

Desarrollamos invitaciones curriculares basadas en juegos inspiradas en la literatura global para alentar las exploraciones de mensajes emocionantes, favoritos y quizás inquietantes, escritos y / o visuales en la literature iniciadas por los niños (Rowe, 1998; Van Sluys y Reinier, 2006). Las invitaciones lúdicas efectivas que fomentaron el pensamiento y la conversación incluyeron:

1. Representando experiencias escolares con arcilla. Esta invitación incluía leer en voz alta los libros *Rain School* (Rumford, 2010) y Deron Goes to Nursery School de Onyefulu (2015), así como ver fotos de casas y escuelas en el vecindario local y en los países mencionados en los libros. Esta obra fomentó conversaciones sobre materiales de construcción, formas de las escuelas, materiales de clase, al igual que recursos y rutinas. Los niños notaron rápidamente que, aunque no estaban obligados a usar uniformes como Deron, algunos de sus hermanos mayores y educadores usan uniformes a diario para la escuela y el trabajo.
2, Hacer chapattis Indios y tortillas Mexicanas con plastilina. Los niños escucharon los libros por Nayar y Roy's (2009) *What Should I Make?* y *Magda's Tortillas/Las Tortillas* de Magda por Chavarria-Chairez y Vega (2000). También compararon y contrastaron fotografías de chapattis y tortillas. El proceso de ir y venir entre las ilustraciones del libro, las fotos y las representaciones tridimensionales con masa apoyó su búsqueda de la forma "correcta" de hacer un chapatti; su necesidad de contar historias sobre comidas familiares y la preparación, y; su uso de palabras de idiomas globales para mejorar su juego. Los niños insistieron en que sus maestros sabían hacer chapattis, conectando la comida con tortillas familiares.
3. Jugar en el área de juego dramático. Esta invitación abarca diferentes tipos, tamaños, texturas y estampados de tela inspirados en libros como *What Can You Do with a Rebozo?* (Tafolla y Córdova, 2008), *Lala Salama: A Tazmanian Lullaby* (Maclahlan y Zunon, 2011), *Carry Me* (Grissman, 2009) y *My Mother's Sari* por Rao y Sabnani (2009), que ofreció varias oportunidades de emparejamiento. Esta vez, el juego infantil se caracterizó por la integración de palabras de vocabulario, como rebozo, kanga, sari y chal, así como momentos en los que los niños atribuyeron nuevos significados a objetos familiares, como transformar un bolso en una canasta para llevar muñecas en la parte posterior, como se ve en *Carry Me* (Grissman, 2009).

## Pensamientos Finales

Las exploraciones de las conexiones culturales son tan importantes como las oportunidades para explorar lo que hace que cada comunidad cultural sea única. Los libros emparejados mejoran estas preguntas al alentar las expectativas de los niños sobre las múltiples formas de ser y hacer en el mundo y sobre la complejidad y la diversidad como fuerza (Ponciano y Shabazian, 2012). Jugar como respuesta a libros emparejados ayuda a los niños pequeños a abrirse camino hacia la comprensión intercultural, ya que usan sus conexiones personales para dar sentido a personajes, contextos e historias globales durante el juego. Los libros globales emparejados sobre la diversidad en y dentro de las comunidades culturales llevan a los niños más allá de su entorno inmediato a comprender el mundo. Esto crea una oportunidad para que los educadores desarrollen contextos de aprendizaje donde los niños pequeños exploran los mundos altamente complejos, diversos y cambiantes que muchos ya viven más allá de las paredes del aula.

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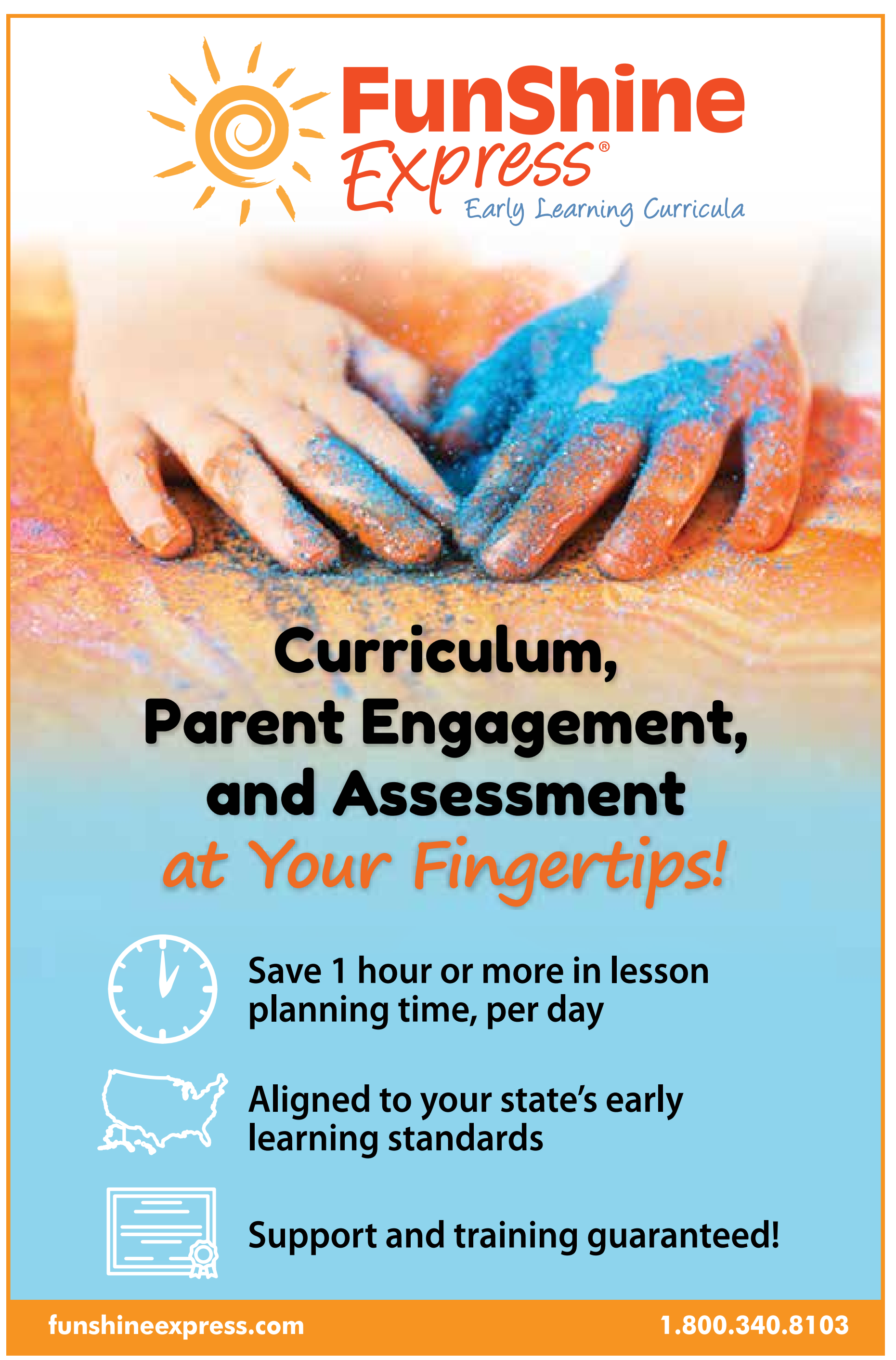


# Effective Inclusion in Preschool and Early Grades: Setting the Stage

**By Lissanna Follari, Laura Pearson, and Maria Navaratne**

At the back of a courtyard, surrounded by art studios, a gallery, and a farm-to-table café, a small, private preschool nurtures children's development and learning through a choice-based art-integrated program. The preschool is inspired by emergent-curriculum models like the schools of Reggio Emilia and project-based learning, and operates on a school-year calendar with half-day and full-day enrollment options. The interior space is a large open room with tall ceilings, a loft with ramp to the left side and a sensory area in the right corner. All of the learning areas and various items around the room are labeled in several languages with icons. The following observation offers a glimpse of several ways the teachers differentiate and vary learning experiences to support access and participation among all children, including those with and without disabilities.

Seven children are finishing sketches (with pencils or block crayons) on white paper around two large wooden tables; some are standing to work, and some are sitting. One of the children is using magazine cutouts to create his "field sketch," instead of drawing. Mr. A is preparing clay and wood scraps in preparation for a sculpting project related to the bridges they are researching. On the opposite side of the room, four children are making puppets (of Three Billy Goats Gruff) as they sit on floor pillows around a large square wood table. One child is in the sensory area, intensely grasping and squishing damp sand and grunting. Ms. D, one of the teachers, is kneeling near him while facing the room, softly narrating what she sees him doing with his hands, body, and voice in a calm, soothing voice. "I see your face is still a little red, and I hear your voice is very low. You're really squeezing your hands hard in that sand. Do you feel how your muscles are tensing and then releasing with each squeeze? With each squeeze, you are helping your body and your mind to calm down." Two children are in the drama loft, using rows of chairs to represent the free shuttle that takes them around town where they visit foot and road bridges.

The environment and practices at the preschool provide a window into several important and effective strategies for creating inclusive learning environments for all children. There is a great deal of choice and flexibility, teachers working together in shared roles, and different levels of activity and skill use with individualized planning by teachers.

This article explores five effective strategies that support inclusion of children with and without disabilities in a shared educational environment or general education classroom: flexible seating, plan from strengths, purposeful grouping, high engagement strategies, differentiating instruction, collaboration and co-teaching. Vivid examples from preschool and second grade are presented with descriptions to offer practitioners ideas and application support across a range of early childhood education settings.

Sensory materials are used to support children's emotional regulation, as well as active play.

## What is Inclusive Education and Why Does it Matter?

Inclusion is a set of values, beliefs, and practices that recognize the naturally occurring range and diversity of learning and de-

velopment, and validate the right of all children to be active and meaningful members of a shared classroom community. Inclusive educators intentionally co-create welcoming learning environments and experiences for children; but also, with children. This means that educators not only commit to beliefs and practices, but additionally engage children in building welcoming environments and developing appreciation about differences. Inclusive practices are specifically designed and implemented to increase access, full participation, and appropriate supports for each child to achieve maximum learning and development (Division for Early Childhood/National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009). Effective inclusive practices and settings are designed to leverage resources from therapeutic specialists, general education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, and assistants. In inclusive settings, the divisions between general and special education are reduced and resources and collaborations are maximized.

Inclusive educators anticipate and expect wide variety in children's interests, skills, level of proficiency, learning style, attention and focus, and communication or expression strengths. For child care and preschool settings, access to therapeutic services may be more limited than in elementary schools. This constraint can leave the responsibility to educators to integrate specialized materials, instructional practices, flexible routines, and targeted instruction. Professionals manage this constraint by being knowledgeable about available resources, utilizing community agency partnerships, and through strategic design of settings and experiences. Differentiating instruction, or planning for a wide range of learner diversity, is effective because teachers build in variety for how children differ from the start, in addition to adjusting or modifying along the way for specific children (Tomlinson, et al, 2003).

## Why Inclusion Matters

Early childhood settings, which include classrooms and programs serving children from birth through 8, are children's first experience with group care and education outside their home. At any level, each child brings a unique background of experiences, strengths, and needs to the classroom in addition to individual personality and learner characteristics. In particular, the range of diverse learner levels and abilities, including behavior habits and skills, is greater in these early years of education than at any other phase of education. Considering that early childhood educators are often the first professionals to notice potential concerns for delays or disabilities, it is essential that all early childhood education professionals develop knowledge and skills around effective inclusive practices.

When centers and schools intentionally create inclusive environments and practices, all children benefit–children with and without disabilities. Above all, inclusive settings reflect an authentic and natural community diversity. When children live and learn in naturally diverse settings, all of them benefit and develop more richly, and authentically come to recognize that differences are simply a natural part of being human. Children with AND without disabilities learn more and achieve stronger outcomes socially and academically in schools and programs that implement effective instructional strategies designed to reach each and every child (Cosier, Causton, Theoharis, 2013; Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, & Kaplan, 2007; Kurth & Mastegergeorge, 2010; Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009).

As one parent of a child with a disability framed it: "There isn't a 'special ed' room at the supermarket, post office, or airport, so don't put my child in one at school. That won't help him succeed in real life" (J. Harmon, personal communication, 11/2/17). To ensure the most robust, meaningful, and positive outcomes for all children, educational professionals must co-create inclusive settings across learning communities with families and children, and be strong models of valuing and appreciating learner diversities.

## Five Effective Strategies for Inclusive Education

The following five practices are powerful and effective ways to co-create inclusive learning environments and experiences for all children. These practices can provide ideas to try in your own setting, but we recognize that each setting and teacher is unique, and it will be important for you to find your own ways to make inclusive practices work for you.

### 1. Flexible Seating

Children are given options and choices to work from positions that are low, middle, and high, and in seating that is soft and firm. Providing children options, choices, and variety in seating can include the following:

- standing tables
- yoga balls
- floor cushions with low tables
- large plastic bins or tubs for floor seating
- floor rockers (legless seat)
- chairs
- wobble stools

While this variety tends to be more common in preschools, children's need for these options actually increases in the early elementary grades. A growing number of elementary educators are also finding successful application of flexible seating in their classrooms. Some educators vary the seating for the whole class (or most of it), as with kindergarten with 23 desks all at standing height and no chairs; or one with almost all the desks with legs removed, perfect for floor sitting. Many educators also vary the seating options within the room. Flexible seating is particularly effective at sustaining children's interest and attention by providing more opportunity for movement within the classroom throughout the day (Barrett, Davies, Zhang, & Barrett, 2015). We need to move our practice away from long periods of inactive sitting. Children simply cannot sustain attention and focus without movement to oxygenate their blood and give their muscles a chance to flex. The element of choice also provides a sense of control and empowerment for children which is highly motivating. The essential step with flexible seating is to set clear expectations and boundaries with the children and practice transitions, like in Mrs. P's class.

Flexible seating 2nd grade.

In Mrs. P's 2nd grade classroom, seating is in small groups at tables. Some are low to the ground with floor cushions, one table has wobble stools instead of chairs, one table is standing height, one table has child-sized chairs, and there are four crates with cushion on the top. An area rug is also used for group floor meetings. There are two children who are given assigned seating for part of their classroom worktime (wobble chair to sustain attention), but most children are either given a choice of seating or rotate around the table groups based on learning activity. Mrs. P transitions the children from the large carpet area to table groups and back to the carpet area during her 60-minute literacy time, using the transition time for movement break as well as to refresh children's attention, while the varied seating options give children choice.

In the above example, Mrs. P has discussed the uses of the flexible seating options and uses specific seating for certain children (based on their individual needs), and also ensures variation in seating that gives all the children a chance to move and access the variety. Children need to understand your intention, whether it be that the wobble chair is for one particular child or to be chosen when any child feels he or she needs to use the slight hip-rocking motion to help him or her focus. It is important that educators plan ahead to integrate this practice and co-create the environment and classroom policies for use. Simply showing up one morning with varied seating options without advanced communication with the children can lead to arguments and even fights over the new seats. Successful use of flexible seating requires that children and teachers work together to co-create the parameters or rules for how to make it work in a shared setting. Expectations around appropriate use, sharing, and switching with other children must be made clear.

## 2. Plan from Strengths

Individualizing learning goals and instructional strategies are essential for children with diagnosed disabilities, and focusing on a strength-based lens is definitely the most effective in supporting children's learning achievement (Elder, Rood & Damiani, 2018). However, individualizing isn't just effective for children with mandated learning plans. Each child learns in unique ways, has particular interests and passions, and individual strengths and needs. Every child benefits from learning experiences that are designed to provide optimal challenge with needed supports, which are planned beginning from a focus on the child's strengths and capabilities. This kind of individualizing doesn't have to be labor-or time-intensive. However, individualizing does require that educators know each child. A great place to start is to learn what each child likes (interests, passions), what the child is good at (strengths in content areas, skills, way of learning or expressing), and then integrating learning experiences to support what the child is learning to do (skills, knowledge, or dispositions). A blank version of the following chart (*Figure 1*) can be reproduced onto quarter-page size sheets and used as a notepad to individualize

**Figure 1.** Sample Individualizing Form

| **Child's Name: Darrel (5y3m)** | **What you know about the child** | **What you can do to enhance child's development- Action Plan** | **How this addresses child's individual needs** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Child Can Do Well (strengths)** | Sketching, drawing<br>Responds to visual cues | Give Darrel a field notebook where he can start with sketches of bridges from field trips and photo books. He agrees to add words to his drawings by labeling, and he is in charge of the field trip journal, in which he writes 2-3 simple words to document the class trips around town to see bridges. His next steps will be to partner with a team and act out the Three Billy Goats Gruff, including constructing a bridge from his sketchbook plans. | Darrel is working on expanding his literacy use, including extending the length of his written communication. Darrell is developing his knowledge of story elements, including character, plot, and setting. |
| **Child Likes to Do** | Building, construction, simple machines<br>Communicate with pictures | | |
| **Child is Learning to Do (areas for growth or IEP goals)** | Developing literacy skills, story elements<br>Working on using words to express ideas, along with pictures | | |

2-4 times per month for each child. This can allow for a rotation through even the busiest class roster. This is a sample individualizing chart for Darrel, in preschool (***see Figure 1***).

As an example of individualizing within her inclusive classroom, Ms. M at the preschool describes her use of an individualizing chart that focuses on strengths and interests to support a child's learning needs. She intentionally uses the child's interests and strengths as motivators for activities targeting his learning goals, or areas of need.

Ms. M explains that, "I know 5-year-old Darrel, who has a diagnosis along the autism spectrum. I know he learns well through visual cues and is especially skilled at making sketches and drawings to convey what he knows. He is always excited about physics-related content and activities like building, construction, and simple machines. We also know that Darrel is working on strengthening his literacy skills, particularly knowledge of story elements and using more words with pictures to convey ideas. These are goals his family has shared with us, and they relate to his Individual Education Plan goals (IEP). I met with the teaching team about what we know about Darrel, and the bridge project (described in the opening vignette) was chosen with him in mind. This is my individualizing chart (Figure 1), where you can see how we are highlighting Darrel as an individual learner within the larger class project".

Starting with the child's strengths and interests in the planning process is an important way to focus on a strength-based view of children, while effectively addressing learning goals or areas of need.

Individualized instruction starts from strengths.

### 3. Purposeful Grouping

Balancing opportunities for children to choose peers in learning centers with teacher-selected groups is another important way to support children's individual needs and tailor instruction. An essential consideration in inclusive classrooms is to rotate groups flexibly, so that the use of ability-grouping is minimal and focused. For specific skill instruction, there are times when grouping based on ability is in children's best interest socially and academically. However, always assigning children to the same group, particularly when an assignment is based on ability, can undermine inclusive practice and feel like a form of exclusion inside the classroom. Keeping children in the same assigned group for an extended period of time limits children's access to interact socially and intellectually with a variety of children and limits exposure to the range of perspectives and styles in the class. Using the '"planning from strengths process," educators can select groups based on interests or areas for growth, but can also select children with complementary strengths and areas for growth to balance the group dynamics. The key is to keep grouping strategies fluid, flexible, and rotating.

Engaging students in small group work through station rotations is a highly effective way to ensure each child's individual learning needs (or IEP goals) are being addressed, and to leverage purposeful grouping to strengthen learning outcomes. With station rotations, children are grouped into teams of 4-6 and they rotate through a series of learning activities (usually 3-5 stations). Some of the station activities are designed to be practice or review of mastered or nearly-mastered content or skills, where children can engage independently. Teachers implement a teacher-directed station, which allows for:

- instruction on new content or skills
- strengthening individual skills
- small teacher-to-child ratio
- building community among learners
- delving more deeply into topics or increased complexity

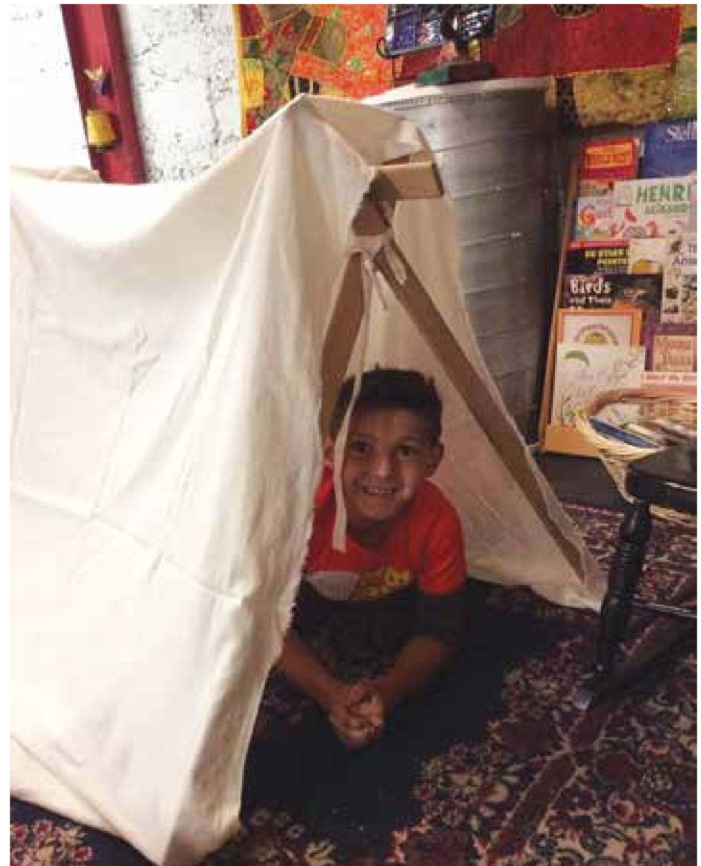
If there are additional staff or volunteers available, then additional stations can be more directed or guided. When teachers design the child teams, they use purposeful grouping of specific children in teams to target specific children's learning needs and strengths, and also effectively differentiate or tailor instructional activities for each child or group (Tomlinson, 2000).

### 4. High Engagement Strategies and Differentiating Instruction

In Mrs. P's 2nd grade classroom, the overall daily schedule aligns with the school-wide plan: brief outdoor recess first thing in the morning, skill review, language arts, brief recess and snack, math, lunch and recess, specials (PE, Art, Music, Science/Technology) in the afternoon. However, within each content area, Mrs. P and the paraprofessional, Ms. E, rotate children around a list of learning tasks. Today the class is exploring weather systems in a meteorology unit.

Mrs. P begins with a 15-minute whole group read-aloud from

a non-fiction reader. During this session, some children use dry-erase board paddles to respond to questions from the teacher, others use colored sticky note flags to answer "yes" or "no" questions. At two points, the children are prompted to turn-and-talk to a neighbor (2 minutes) about a part from the reading and the two teachers circulate the room to listen to conversations. Mrs. P and Ms. E use this time to capture notes on specific children's comments as part of the assessment plan. After the read aloud, the class breaks up into small groups. Some children are watching a video clip and completing a question-answer page, and a team is playing a matching game with weather system picture cards and new vocabulary words. One team is talking and writing notes on poster paper hung on the wall with the help of Ms. E. One group is illustrating the stories they wrote from the prompt "The day it rained cats and dogs" (connecting to study of idioms), and four children are working on writing personal narratives at a table with Mrs. P. A few children are looking at a picture book in a "book tent" corner while listening to a story read aloud on the iPad. At 14-minute intervals, Mrs. P's timer signals a soft chime and the children rotate learning stations, initialing their activities on a laminated choice board at the front of the room. The transition to the next station takes less than one minute, as the children have practiced the procedure many times. Carley, who has an intellectual disability and uses a brace to walk, is paired with a peer buddy to navigate between centers. With a quick glance and the chart, Mrs. P can see which children have completed specific stations and redirect anyone who might have missed a rotation, while Ms. E keeps an eye on Carley and her buddy and supports if needed.



Reading tent for a 2nd grader.

The keys to capturing and sustaining children's very different ways of learning and personal interests in learning activities is to embed variety and manage pacing. These are accomplished through differentiating instruction, where instructional activities and materials offer choice, variety, scaled levels, and movement (both physical movement and switching around learning tasks) (Tomlinson, et al, 2003). Using center rotations allows for children to learn through varied activities; some that tap into strengths and others that develop skills in ways of learning that are less strong. By keeping whole-group listening sessions short and focused, and moving children into small group or individual activities that allow for movement, Mrs. P is able to engage and sustain each child's attention easily for a 60-90-minute block. This also allows her to work with small groups of children on individual goals.

An important consideration in using center or learning station rotations is in the careful and intentional planning. This takes time and attention to create a balance of stations within which children can be engaged independently (without teacher direction), and centers which are more teacher-directed. Care must be paid to the time spent in stations and to practice the rotation procedures with children. With planning and practice, rotations can be an effective daily routine to allow for high engagement and targeted learning for each child in the class.

### 5. Collaboration and Co-Teaching

In inclusive settings, teaming a general education and special education teacher or specialist in the same classroom is called co-teaching. There are several structures or models to co-teaching, including dividing students into rotating learning stations, teaming to deliver instruction with harmoniously shared roles, and dividing the class into groups assigned to each teacher (Friend, 2016). Regardless of structure, it is important that both teachers co-plan, deliver instruction together, and assess children's progress collaboratively (Murawski & Dieker, 2008).

Co-teaching is a highly effective way to provide service delivery to meet student IEP service goals while being fully included in the general education classroom, as well as to provide more access and contact between teachers and students. When done well, it is also particularly effective at increasing both teachers' satisfaction and enjoyment in teaching. An essential feature of successful co-teaching is that both teachers are valued, utilized, and fully leveraged in the classroom. Teachers co-plan for instruction and individualizing, and discuss roles and strategies together often. This kind of collaboration also includes leveraging paraprofessionals and assistants as essential in the co-teaching team, taking on instruction delivery within the class and not only 'attached' to a specific child.

In the preschool classroom from the opening vignette, Ms. D has specialized knowledge in positive behavior support and serves to specifically meet therapeutic needs for one child, but she is an equal in the three-teacher team in the classroom. In the 2nd grade, Mrs. P leveraged both teachers as a team to effectively engage all children through the use of station rotations, as well as to collect important assessment data. Within the stations, specific children's IEP goals and specialized learning needs are met with

individualized instruction, and every child in the class accesses targeted instruction by the classroom teacher and paraprofessional or teaching assistant every day (through purposeful grouping).

## Conclusion

Effective inclusive education requires careful design and intentional actions. Inclusion requires collaboration and teamwork. For professionals who are new to integrating inclusive practices in their programs and schools, it can feel daunting. This article provided descriptions of five specific strategies and examples of effective practices to guide educators and teams in this work. There are myriad ways for professionals to approach integrating more inclusive practices into their classrooms and schools, but these five practices have demonstrated effectiveness and are a great place to start. Flexible seating, planning from strengths, purposeful grouping, high engagement strategies and differentiating, and co-teaching offer specific strategies around the physical environment, interactional environment, and instructional activities to broadly support inclusive education. When beginning on the path towards more effective inclusive education, it's important to take small steps, assessing success as you go, and give yourself room to shift strategies if something doesn't feel like it's working. Inclusion takes practice and commitment, and doesn't always go smoothly. However, the emphasis on ensuring that all children belong and have a place in the classroom truly is worth it! Above all, professionals approach inclusive practice with an attitude of collegiality, an interest in being effective in acknowledging all children's strengths and needs, and a willingness to try new practices with a spirit of innovation and collaboration.

**Dr. Lissanna Follari** is Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. Her work focuses on diversities studies and innovative approaches to inclusive early care and education.

**Laura (Lori) Pearson** has been a classroom teacher for 30 years. She began her education at Louisiana State University with a degree in Elementary Education. After teaching for a few years, Lori had the opportunity to work with Special Education students. She then pursued an additional degree in Special Education/Mild to Moderate and worked as a Resource Teacher for a few years.

**Maria Navaratne** has been teaching since 1992 when she graduated from Anglia Ruskin University, UK with BEd (Hons) in Education Studies and Art. Maria began her teaching with Grades 3 and 4; Year 6 - 9 in a school for children with Moderate Learning Differences, followed by managing the Special Needs provisions in Elementary schools in Essex, UK.

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# Designing and Implementing Differentiated Learning Opportunities and Experiences to Support Best Practices for Teachers at all Levels

**By Lisa Gannoe, Dana Bush, Mary A. Sciaraffa, and Amy Kay**

Administrators in the field of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) assume multiple roles each day because of the many interdependent and interacting components of the early childhood program. Overseeing the orientation of new teachers and planning professional development is just one task of many for the administrator. Teachers within ECCE programs have various levels of education and experiences, thus orienting and developing individualized professional development practices can be challenging. This article will provide insight into creative orientation and professional development training that will motivate and inspire teachers.

## Generational Values

Generations are defined as a society-wide peer-group born over approximately 20 years which are shaped by such things as historical and societal events, technological advances, and economic conditions (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Each generation possesses diverse values and beliefs based upon significant historical and social life events and/or experiences (Giancola, 2006). These generational characteristics are used to acknowledge that there is diversity within age groups based upon beliefs and values shaped by historical events and experiences. The degree of the commonalities and differences within these characteristics has implications regarding how administrators conduct orientation and professional development across temporal generational categories. The younger to older age groups within the population are defined by temporal class and often stereotypically identified with nomenclature such as Millennials/Gen Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. Diverse characteristics and values across the generations can cause a generational divide; however, all generations value trust, respect, credible leaders, loyalty, feeling competent, and feedback from their administrators (Winchell, 2007). The definitions and the behaviors associated with these values differ from one generation to the next. Administrators and colleagues can enhance relationships in the ECCE setting by understanding an individual's values, beliefs, and behaviors. The recognition of the depth of diversity and individuality within teacher and staff may further assist the administrator with the delivery format of the desired concepts to be taught during the onboarding, orientation, and professional development processes.

## The Dilemma

As new teachers and staff are employed in ECCE Programs, orientation materials are often put together hastily to satisfy a wide range of program or accreditation requirements. New employees have different training, education, and experience that they bring to the organization. Orientations for new staff should fit the diverse levels and experiences of individuals to provide relevant and meaningful participation. Often, new employees with higher levels of education and more experience receive less orientation as other new hires. Working with new employees should be considered as compass orienteering, with the mission

statement as a guide and policies and procedures as the map. Organizations find themselves navigating the uncharted territories of new employee assistance with understanding the culture and climate, consideration of the social-emotional development of the adult, ways to handle conflict with co-workers, and a true understanding of what it means to be able to work with families. A new path can be forged when teachers and staff gain insight into their current orientation practices.

## Onboarding

An employee is a "new" hire when she is in a different position regardless if she has been employed by the organization for many years or a new employee. In either situation, effective onboarding practices are crucial to future success. Onboarding refers to methods used to orient employees into new roles and provide them with the knowledge necessary to become effective organizational members. The following five methods foster a feeling of acceptance and a commitment to the organization.

### Five Methods

**1. Tell the Story of the Organization:** Explaining the organization's mission, goals, and directions are essential pieces of organizational information, but what is the STORY of the program? What is its history? What is at the heart of the program? Who are its people?

**2. Explain the Expectations:** Every position should have a job description detailing the position expectation, but what are those "unspoken" expectations? Example: Do not leave smelly trash in the bin past 4:30 p.m. because the custodians leave at 5 p.m. Take the trash to the outside trash can. Explain those little things that more seasoned employee knows. The last things an administrator wants to hear is "I wasn't told that…".

**3. Have Regular Meetings (formal & informal):** It is important to give a new hire space, absolutely, but take time to check-in both formally (scheduled sit-down meeting) and informally (going for a cup of coffee, sending an email of, "How are things?" etc.). This will help the employee develop a bond with the administrator by establishing trust.

***4. Assign a Mentor:*** Regardless of the formality of the mentor program, it is important for a new hire to have an individual within the organization she can depend upon to answer questions and be a sounding board. Relationship building is crucial to successful onboarding.

***5. Have an Exit Interview:*** Onboarding typically lasts a year. At the end, schedule an exit interview. Ask the now "seasoned" employee to help you develop better onboarding experiences for future new hires. This shows you value their opinion and want their help in improving the experience for others.

Orienting staff should include the center environments in which teachers work and include the intellectual, personal, and physical environments of the center (Nicholson & Reifel, 2011). The quality of the staff and teacher training received is correlated with better developmental outcomes, more positive teacher behaviors, produce higher quality caregiving, and can make a significant difference in teacher behaviors (Nicholson & Reifel, 2011).

## Organizational Culture, Climate, and Vision

The level of commitment a teacher has with a center can be driven by their perceptions of the organization. Understanding where perceptions differ between administrators and employees about the work environment can be valuable in creating the commitment. This entails articulating the organizational mission, goals and directions; planning small wins; being a capable storyteller of the organizations culture, and envisioning the future (Sullivan, 2010). During the first year of teaching, teachers are more receptive to guidance and feedback from their organizations. The first year sets the tone as staff begin to understand the expectations for working with others and the requirements for ongoing professional development. They form ideas about what the organization perceives as reflective practice (Bloom, 2014). Child care centers cannot afford staff turnover, not only because of financial costs, but also the damage that can be done to the center reputation, employee morale, or customer satisfaction (Sciarra et. al., 2016) and most importantly the children. Collins (2015) describes how important is it to get the right people working for a child care center, and he notes the difficulty of trying to get the wrong people out of the organization.

## Cultivating a Climate of Leadership

Employees that have worked for an organization many years should be developed as future leaders. Providing additional responsibilities or mentoring roles can aid in building a cohesive team. Sciarra et. al. (2016) state, "Pride, commitment, and collegiality abound among those who share ownership in a successful enterprise" (p. 185). Brown (2014) describes a cohort approach, where teachers work together in an effort to be a part of a learning community where their opinions matter, they can learn without judgment, and they can eventually see themselves as a professional. The benefits of this approach to the childcare center can shift teachers from a climate of resistance to a climate of enthusiasm. Inducting teachers into a childcare center means providing a thorough orientation to the policies, practices, and expectations of the center, where emotional support is given, where novice teachers can develop a personal style, and where staff are socialized into the life and culture of the center (Bloom, 2014). Nicholson and Reifel (2011) build upon this idea by stating that training experiences should focus upon peer relationships as the types of relationships that contribute to how teachers in childcare centers learn about their practices.

## Changing Our Strategies to Work with the Millennial Teacher

Given the differences in generational values and behaviors, supporting the Millennial teacher can be challenging to administrators and colleagues. Baby Boomer employees are motivated by such messages as, "We need you and value you here." The Gen X employee, who values independence, is motivated by phrases such as, "Do it your way." In contrast, the Millennial teacher needs to hear such messages as, "You can be a real asset here" or "You and your colleagues can help turn this program around." Building rapport with the Millennial teacher means assisting her

in feeling affiliated with the program. Administrators should explain to the Millennial teacher where she fits into the vision of the program and give her a greater purpose for which to aim. It also means giving the new teacher responsibilities right away, recognizing efforts, and rewarding her behavior. These teachers want constant feedback to adjust their behaviors and improve performance immediately, thus succeeding faster. As one Millennial teacher shared, "My boss is wonderful. I think it is because she is constantly giving feedback on my work. I like knowing I am doing something right, and when I could be doing better."

Applying Erik Erikson's lifespan development theory, the Millennial teacher, in her young adulthood years, is struggling with intimacy and solidarity versus isolation. If negotiating this stage in her life is successful, then she will experience intimacy on a deep level. In contrast, if she is not successful, then isolation and distance from others may occur. Therefore, colleagues and administrators of Millennial teachers need to assist her in feeling affiliated with the group. Mentoring and coaching are two techniques that can assist the new Millennial teacher in feeling connected rather than isolated. For example, are cell phones and computer use banned while the teachers are at work? This policy is a difficult order to fill for the Millennial teacher but one that is important due to safety of the children. The Cisco Connected World Technology Report (2014) found that more than half of college students globally (56%) replied that if they encountered a company that banned access to social media, they would either not accept the job offer or would accept the job and disregard the rule. This generation relies on technology more than any other generation. If the mentor, coach, or administrator can check in with the Millennial teacher via technology during break time as this could satisfy her need to use technology during the work day.

## Mentoring Strategies

Administrators can use members of other generations to mentor Millennial teachers. A mentor can pay close attention to another teacher's experiences and concerns, while feeling valued herself through sharing her knowledge and experience with someone else. It is important that mentoring does not include lectures. Mentors need to inspire the teachers and show them how to turn goals into action. The mentor must help the new teacher learn "the ropes," but the mentor needs to understand that the new teacher will use "the ropes" in a different way. Mentors need to connect with the new teacher through electronic meetings as well as face-to-face meetings. Meetings should include specific and honest feedback on expectations, open dialogue, and assistance in learning delayed gratification.

## Coaching Strategies

The Millennial teacher is deeply driven and wants to be professionally developed in a personal way. Members of the other generations can utilize their own knowledge and experience by coaching the new teacher. Coaching is different from mentoring in that the coach is focused on directing or instructing an individual to do a specific task, achieve a goal or develop certain skills. Coaches should provide opportunities to engage in higher-order thinking and can use peer instruction combined with collaborative experiences and clear goals to enhance motivation. They can provide authentic and experiential activities when assisting others. Coaches need to keep in mind that Millennials are the "good job" generation; thus, recognition and reward is important and motivational to these teachers. Recognition and reward of the right behaviors in a timely fashion will bring results.

## Checking the Weather and Calming the Storms

Each child care center can be described as having its own unique personality or "weather." Organizational theorists describe the distinct atmosphere of work settings as organizational climate (Bloom, 2010). Bloom (2014) describes a three-phase plan to be followed over a year of regularly scheduled opportunities to meet with the director, the supervisor, or mentor to reflect on practice, obtain specific feedback, and create incremental steps to build skills. It is important to make connections and build rapport, learn the ropes of the center's approaches, procedures, and requirements, and assist in understanding best practices for young children. A healthy center climate has warm and caring relationships among its members that create commitment. When disagreements among co-workers arise or when the director and staff do not see eye to eye, the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct can provide a professional guide. NAEYC states in the Ethical Conduct Code (2011) that when there are concerns about the behavior of a co-worker, "We shall first let that person know of our concern in a way that shows respect for personal dignity and for the diversity to be found among staff members, and then attempt to resolve the matter collegially and in a confidential manner" (p. 5). Diminishing the reputation of the program or not reporting a colleague's unethical or incompetent behavior would be violating the code.

Bloom (2010) explains that one way to orient new staff is to have them sign a commitment to their colleagues. This simple document that the employee signs affirms that the employee will find solutions rather than complaining, will try to create a fun and enjoyable workplace, report errors, follow rules, behave professionally, and assist others when necessary.

A work environment survey can provide important feedback about how members of the center feel about their place of work. Knowing how employees feel about the goals of the program and the decision-making process can alleviate differences between administration and staff.

## Moving Beyond Traditional Professional Development

Another element related to the retention of high-quality staff is that of professional development. Novice and even some veteran teachers may need guidance regarding meaningful professional development opportunities. However, when an administrator realizes the professional level of the staff has risen, as evidenced by teachers taking initiative to further their own education, seeking out trainings without assistance or reminders, and enthusiastical-

ly implementing strategies, ideas, and practices into their own classrooms, then a different type of professional development plan is needed. A challenging question administrators often face is, "How can we encourage teachers to 'want for themselves' professional growth and development?" A move from the more traditional, typical form of professional development toward differentiated learning opportunities could potentially raise the professional level of the staff because the expectations for their professionalism is higher. It is not absolutely necessary that the interest and abilities of the staff be demonstrated prior to implementing this alternative type of plan, but it is imperative that the administration has high expectations and a sincere belief that these expectations can be met. In a discussion about staff meetings, Haugen (2014) claimed, "If staff members know they (staff meetings) are exciting, innovative opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, they're more likely to come prepared, engaged, and enthusiastic about participating" (p. 80), and the same is true for professional development. Teachers who have a voice in the type of professional development chosen, who know their voice will be respected and heard, and who believe this is a time of collaboration with colleagues can very well become more actively interested in and involved with their own learning. At the beginning of a programming year, this new concept of having staff meetings be opportunities for collaboration was introduced to the teachers at the Child Development Lab at the McPhaul Center at the University of Georgia. Each staff member had the opportunity to sign up for collaborative group activities such as Book Club, Writing Group, and/or Other. Individuals could sign up for multiple groups, if interested. At the end of the programming year, teacher feedback was requested in the form of a questionnaire. Following are explanations around the creation of these groups, including excerpts from the teachers' responses about their participation.

## Implementing a Book Club

For the book club members at the McPhaul Center, suggestions were made about book selections from teacher members who voluntarily signed up for participation. Decisions on what to read were democratically made by voting. The Book Club read and discussed Derman-Sparks and Ramsey's (2011) *What if All the Kids are White?*, Bronson and Merryman's (2009) *Nurture Shock*, and Druckerman's (2012) *Bringing up BeBe*. Participants' comments regarding the Book Club evidenced the effectiveness of this strategy for their professional development. The responses in the questionnaire gave supporting evidence of the effectiveness of the Book Club including, "It has provided opportunity to read professional literature that I, otherwise, would not have made a priority." Another teacher noted in the questionnaire that, "It's been nice to see different viewpoints on topics

It has been helpful to read a variety of professional books and then discuss with my colleagues about how these topics apply specifically to the Early Childhood field," and, "There's a ton of early childhood literature available, but it can be hard to find personal time/motivation to read it. A group that keeps us accountable and discussing different philosophies, perspectives and cultures about EC provides an excellent opportunity to grow and learn as professionals." As those working in Early Childhood Care and Education, we often use the term "life-long learners" to describe a characteristic we want to instill in our students. However, one of the goals of differentiated professional development is to instill a love of learning and reignite the spark in our teachers.

## Implementing a Writing Group

McPhaul Center teachers who signed up to participate in the Writing Group shared topics that could be potentially developed into manuscripts and was determined the best means of reviewing each other's writing. This group had the least concrete evidence of professional development; however, its meaningfulness and purpose in supporting the development and perception of self and others as professionals were definitely present. Comments in the questionnaire following group participation noted that the most helpful things about the group were: "The dialogue created with colleagues about the field (and not anecdotal based nor classroom centric). The conversations have concerned various pedagogies tied to action research and to our individual attempts to write about all that stuff," "I've enjoyed the opportunity to talk with other teachers who share my goal of professional publication", and "The writers group works for me because I can work on my own and still interact with others. Also, I am a very process-oriented person and the ongoing process of writing works for me." As can be seen in these teachers' comments, the design of the Writing Group reflected the uniqueness and interests of each individual with the commonality being that there was a desire and goal to write.

## Implementing a Special Topics Group

The Special Topics group of teachers immediately expressed interest in bringing in specialists to talk with the teachers and took on the responsibility of contacting individuals, coordinating schedules, and organizing when they would be available to our staff. Across the programming year, presentations were given by a physical therapist, occupational therapist, and speech therapist who regularly serve children in our center. At the end of the year, teachers commented, "I have learned so much from these professionals talking with us in a small group setting," and "This group is a way for me to gain information that is pertinent to the children I teach and can directly and (for the most part) immediately affect my teaching abilities".

Learning from professionals through interacting with them personally, reading and discussing their work with others, or reading to improve writing assists in gaining information relevant to the children served that positively affects teaching. Having the opportunity to ask questions directly to a specialist, a supervisor, or a colleague need to be considered the essence of engaging, meaningful, effective professional development. When teachers are given the opportunity to have an active role in their professional development, the learning becomes personally meaningful and professionally beneficial.

## Conclusion

Employees in early childhood care and education settings are

diverse in age, life experiences, and educational levels. These diverse characteristics and values across the generations may inhibit the quality of the onboarding, the orientation processes, and the implementation of professional development systems. The characteristics that are common across the generations should be identified and used to promote a sense of commitment to the organization as a whole by clearly defining the potential rewards of the career and the professional development goals for each specific generation. If left unaddressed, the magnitude of the diversities may impede the individual's commitment to the organization and the profession at the determent to the advancement of the organization.

Understanding typical generational values and traits can help facilitate a more mutually respectful environment and more effective goal directed behavior, especially as intergenerational groups are required to work closely together. A productive work environment for all employees includes keeping everyone in the communication loop, assessing opinions and reactions, providing positive and immediate feedback, and using a variety of professional development strategies.

**Dr. Lisa Gannoe** is an Associate Professor of Child and Family Studies at Eastern Kentucky University. She holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and a teaching license in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education.

**Dr. Dana Keller Bush** is the Department Chair of Applied Human Sciences at Eastern Kentucky University. She holds a Ph.D. in Studies in Higher Education from the University of Kentucky. She has a Master of Science in Family Studies with an Early Childhood Development emphasis from the University of Kentucky.

**Dr. Mary Sciaraffa, CFLE**, is an Associate Professor in Child and Family Studies at Eastern Kentucky University. She holds a doctorate degree in Curriculum & Instruction from Louisiana State University.

**Dr. Amy M. Kay** holds a Doctorate degree in Language and Literacy Education. She has worked in Early Childhood Education for over 20 years and is currently a Clinical Assistant Professor in Human Development and Family Science at the University of Georgia. In this position, she has served as the Director of the Child Development Lab at the McPhaul Center for the past thirteen years.

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# A Kindergarten Teacher's Beliefs and Approaches to Writing Instruction with Dual Language Learners

**By Elizabeth Lowrance-Faulhaber and Cheri Williams**

## Conceptual Framework

We grounded our project in sociocultural theory, which suggests that learning is situated in authentic activity, mediated by cultural tools, and supported by more experienced others (Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 2009). Wertsch (2009) asserted that cultural tools, or "mediational means" (p. 24), facilitate and fundamentally shape human action and interaction. As learners use both physical (e.g., books, graphic organizers, pictures) and cognitive or symbolic (e.g., language) tools to mediate their participation in learning activities, they eventually appropriate those tools as their own. Rogoff (2003) argued that parents and teachers facilitate children's learning through guided participation in authentic activities.

Dual language learners (DLLs) is a term used to describe children eight years old or younger who are learning a second language (L2) while acquiring the first language (L1; Wagner, 2016). In 2015, 67% of the 4.5 million English language learners (ELLs) in U.S. schools were DLLs (McFarland et al., 2017). Despite that number, and the importance of writing to academic achievement (Puranik & Lonigan, 2011) little research has investigated writing instruction with DLLs (Hammer et al., 2014). To address that gap in the research literature, we used exploratory, qualitative methods to examine one kindergarten teacher's beliefs about writing and approaches to writing instruction with five DLLs. We aimed to discover practical instructional techniques this teacher found useful when applied in her classroom.

We also grounded our project in the research literature on writing instruction with DLLs in mainstream classrooms. The body of work to date suggests that a balanced approach to literacy lessons, which integrates skills instruction within meaning-based activities and daily opportunities to write and to talk about writing with teachers and peers in both the L1 and L2 supports DLLs' literacy achievement (Williams & Lowrance-Faulhaber, 2018). Moreover, incorporating DLLs' first language and home culture into the writing curriculum encourages children's bilingualism and biliteracy (Zapata & Laman, 2016).

To build on this body of work, we identified a kindergarten teacher who espoused a balanced literacy framework. We ex-

amined the mediational tools she taught her students during daily writing lessons and explored the ways in which she used guided participation to support their learning. We also explored how the teacher's beliefs about writing instruction with DLLs played-out in her instruction.

## Methods

We conducted the study in a half-day kindergarten classroom in a PreK-2 school within an affluent district in the Midwest, which had recently experienced an influx of immigrant families. Many DLLs had enrolled in the PreK-2 school. The district had adopted the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP, http://readingandwritingproject.org/) 10 years prior and provided teachers yearly professional development on their grade-level curriculum. Approximately 81% of kindergarteners and 99% of third graders in the district met state objectives for reading.

The kindergarten teacher, Renee (all names are pseudonyms), had a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, a master's degree in reading, and nine years of professional development on the TCRWP early literacy curriculum; however, she had little training in how to differentiate instruction for DLLs. There were 22 students in her kindergarten class, five of whom were DLLs: two Japanese speakers, two Telugu speakers, and one Portuguese speaker.

We used two primary research questions to guide data collection and analysis: (a) What are the teacher's beliefs about how DLLs learn to write, and how do those beliefs influence her writing instruction with DLLs? (b) How does the teacher approach writing instruction with the DLLs in her class?

### Data Collection

The first author collected all data for this study. First, she conducted an in-depth audio-recorded interview with Renee to gather information about the beliefs that guided her instruction (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Then, using detailed field notes and video-recordings, she documented five one-hour observations of Renee's writing instruction over a six-week timeframe (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

### Data Analysis

We analyzed the data inductively using cyclical qualitative coding techniques (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). To begin, the first author created expanded write-ups of her field notes and transcribed the audio and video recordings. She then combed the data recursively to identify and label specific phenomenon with descriptive codes (e.g., stretching, revising). Next, she grouped related data and condensed descriptive codes into pattern codes (e.g., tools). Then, both authors reviewed the analysis and identified major findings and answers to the research questions.

## Findings

### Renee's Beliefs

Our analysis of the data revealed four key beliefs Renee held about writing, writing instruction, and DLLs' writing development, as described in the section to follow.

**Writing is a tool for communicating.** Renee described children as "storytellers" with compelling thoughts, feelings, and experiences to share. She stated, "We want kids to be storytellers, and we want them to understand that they can write, and what they have to say is important." She went on to say:

"For English learners, my philosophy has always been to find a way for them to be successful at what we're doing. I want them to feel like they're authors and that they do have stories to tell, even if the stories may not be in English currently."

Renee viewed writing as a means of self-expression, providing children in her classroom opportunities to voice their stories. She wanted to help her DLLs use writing as a tool to share their stories.

**Reading and writing should be integrated.** Renee believed that reading and writing were related processes and that by integrating reading and writing instruction, teachers could support children's proficiency in both. She explained: "It all meshes together, and that works better, especially in a kindergarten classroom." Renee devoted an hour each day to literacy, and activities were seldom exclusively reading or writing. For example, she used published children's books as models for her students' writing as well as to teach letter-sound relationships, print conventions (e.g, punctuation, capitalization), and features of genre (e.g., characters or setting in a narrative). She called the district's required spelling words "read-and-write words," explaining that, "If they can read them, they can write them." Children were invited to read the stories they had written aloud to share them with classmates.

**Children have "unlimited aptitude."** Renee believed that given the proper tools, children have greater potential as writers than educators usually expect. "I believe that kids can do way more than we ever give them credit for; I believe that young children have unlimited aptitude." She continued, "I know students can do a lot, if we give them the tools to do it." To punctuate this belief, Renee shared examples of kindergarten children who wrote stories that included elaboration, dialogue, and inner thoughts and feelings.

**DLLs' writing development is akin to monolingual peers', but at a slower pace.** Renee explained that she expected DLLs' writing products to be like English speakers' who were just beginning to write. She asserted that children's earliest work took the form of pictures representing ideas; eventually, children understood that words could serve this purpose. When discussing differentiation, Renee said she supported DLLs as she would any child. "Basically, it's taking them on their path on their time versus keeping up with the other students, because this is a second language for them." She continued, "If you see an English language learner with a three-page book with just pictures and a few letters on the page, I feel like we've accomplished a lot in that story."

## Renee's Instruction

In our interview with Renee, she spoke of "the tools" children need to be successful as readers and writers. Our analysis revealed that Renee used explicit instruction and guided participation to teach her students three mediational tools and three writing processes.

**Mediational tools.** Just as a carpenter uses a hammer to interact with a nail or a saw to interact with a board, Renee believed that writers need a set of tools to interact with, or mediate, their writing. We noticed a few pervasive patterns in Renee's instruction that demonstrated how this belief shaped her instruction.

**Stretching.** The first tool we observed Renee teach, in large group activities and one-on-one, was "stretching," segmenting the sounds in words (Clay, 1993). To model this tool, Renee held her fists in front of her, knuckles touching, then slowly pulled them apart as if stretching a giant rubber band, clearly enunciating each sound in the word. One day, the class was practicing spelling their "read and write" words by playing a game called "Sparkle." The children, including the DLLs, stood in a circle and Renee announced, "The word is 'get.' Let's start with Sam." Sam enthusiastically shouted, "G!" and the child next to her shouted, "E!" The next child shouted, "T!" and the next child proclaimed, "Sparkle!" The next child in the circle sat down, and Renee announced another word. The game moved quickly, Renee continued to call out words, and when she came to the word "stop," she paused and stretched the word. She held two fists in front of her, and as she pulled them apart, she slowly said each sound in the word then said the word quickly. "S-T-O-P. Stop. Hiro [a Japanese speaker] it's your turn. What letter makes the /s/ sound?" With a big grin, Hiro replied, "S!"

Later, while helping Hiro write a letter to his dad, Renee said, Let's pull "dad" apart. Using the same technique she used during the game, Renee "stretched" the word dad. Then she held Hiro's fists and slowly pulled them apart as she enunciated each sound, /d/ /a/ /d/, and said, "Write it." Hiro imitated Renee's stretching motion, and as he said each sound, he paused to write the corresponding letter. Renee made the most of this one-on-one moment with Hiro to show him how the stretching tool could help him spell the words he was writing.

**Letter-sound linking chart.** Renee often used stretching in conjunction with an alphabet linking chart (Pinnell & Fountas, 2003). For example, while working one-on-one with Ajay, a Telugu speaker, Renee used the alphabet linking chart to help him spell dragons. The word dragons was what Renee called, "a tricky word" for Ajay to spell, but it was an essential word for the telling of his story, so Renee invited Ajay to be a "brave speller." She pointed to the chart and began to stretch the word, "Listen and point to the sound you hear." As Ajay pointed to the sounds on the chart, Renee said, "Write it," and he wrote each letter he identified. By using the letter-sound linking chart as a physical tool and pairing its use with stretching and writing, Renee added to Ajay's toolbox, affording him the ability to spell even the "tricky words" he needed to share his own stories.

**Hunk chunks.** Renee taught a tool she called hunk chunks, looking or listening for small recognizable words within larger words to help children read or write words they did not yet know (Clay, 1993). For example, Renee pointed to the word Brandon in the Morning Message and said, "Look! We're going to hunk chunk Brandon's name with our finger." Using her finger, she drew a circle around and in Brandon and asked, "What do you see?" The class shouted, "and" and Renee circled and with a marker. Then, she pointed to on. The class shouted, "on!" Renee responded, "Yeah! Brand-on, Brand-on."

## Writing processes

**Identifying an audience.** To model the ways in which authors identify an audience for their writing, Renee used the children's book *I Wanna Iguana* (Orloff, 2004). Renee said, "In our book [we read] yesterday, Alex wanted an Iguana. He convinced his mom to get him that Iguana. Who did he have to change?" The students responded, "His mom." Then, Renee invited the children to think about a change they wanted to make. The children, including the DLLs, sat in a circle and passed around a stuffed tiger. When the children held the tiger, it was their turn to share. The children said, "I want a video game because mine got broke." "Something I want is a cat." "I want another cat book because I already have one that says, 'meow meow'." This activity gave DLLs an opportunity to listen to other children's language and orally rehearse what they wanted to write. It also allowed Renee to build vocabulary and extend their messages.

Later, while co-authoring a letter to request a change like the one Alex had written to his mom in the story, Renee said, "In every letter he wrote, he did the same thing. He knew who he was writing to. Who did he have to change?" The children responded, "His mom!" Renee continued, "So a writer who wants to make a change is always thinking about who needs to make the change, and that's the person you write to." In this example, Renee strategically used the reading of a model text as a shared activity to help the children learn how to identify an audience for their letter. It demonstrated Renee's belief about integrating other modes of language (i.e., listening, speaking, reading) into the writing lesson because they all "mesh together."

**Writing in a genre.** Renee introduced the children to persuasive writing by teaching them how to give support for an argument. She explained: "I want you to prove to me what your favorite special is [i.e., art, gym, music, library]. You prove with the word because. For example, I like art because I get to create things." Using that template, the children took turns saying which specials they liked best and proving with because (e.g., "I like gym because I get to run fast."). Again, the children had an opportunity to think about what they might write and orally rehearse before writing.

**Revising.** Renee taught her students how to revise their work by "adding more." She displayed her writing on the Smart Board: Don't feed dogs people food. She asked, "Does anyone have a question or a suggestion that will help me add more?" A student asked, "Why can't dogs eat people food?" Renee respond-

ed, "Don't feed dogs people food because it will make them sick." Then, she explained that because of the students' question, she "added more." The children then read their writing to each other and asked their partners questions that would help them "add more." Hiro and Vitor (a Portuguese speaker) were partners, and Renee sat with them as they worked, guiding their conversation. She said, "Here's a question you should be asking your partner. What are you teaching me in this picture? Ask that question." When the boys did not respond, she pointed to Vitor's picture, and said, "Tell me about this." Renee used more straightforward language for the DLLs and modeled the revising strategy once more.

## Discussion and Implications

Renee's instruction reflected the research on early writing with both native-English speakers and DLLs. She used a balanced approach to literacy and provided daily opportunities for students to write and to talk about writing (Flynn, 2007). Moreover, Renee's beliefs were reflected in her instruction, demonstrating the ways in which her professional knowledge and experiences mediated her teaching and instructional decision-making (Cummings, 2007; Authors, 2012).

Because Renee believed that children have unlimited aptitude to become readers and writers if given the "right tools," she explicitly taught specific mediational tools and writing processes in every lesson we observed, and she used guided participation, as well as independent practice in authentic reading and writing activities, to help students appropriate those tools and processes (Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 2009). Reading, writing, listening, and speaking were seamlessly integrated in those lessons, so the tools and processes she taught could be used for both decoding and encoding text. When she taught children to "stretch" words, and to look or listen for "hunk chunks," for example, she was supporting both reading and writing processes. Moreover, employing those mediational tools supports children's phonemic awareness (Craig, 2006) and invented spelling (Uhry, 1999; Snow et al., 2015).

Renee believed that writing is a tool for communication, and so she provided frequent opportunities for students to write on topics of their choosing. For example, she allowed children to choose what they wanted and whom they would "try to change" during a curricular unit on persuasive writing. She used a model text as a shared, authentic reading activity and gave the DLLs a chance to orally rehearse their ideas as well as listen to the other children express their ideas in English. Such an approach often motivates DLLs to write (Guccione, 2011) and helps them to understand that writing is a way to express ideas that are personally meaningful and serve their own purposes (Hu & Commeyras, 2008).

Renee believed that DLLs' writing development follows much the same path as that of native English-speaking children, and our observations indicated that she did little to differentiate instruction for the DLLs in her class. Some scholars suggest that DLLs' writing development progresses similarly to that of monolingual English-speaking children (e.g., Buckwalter & Lo, 2002; Rubin & Galvin-Carlin, 2005); however, a growing body of work contends that DLLs' writing development is more complex, because children are learning to write across two, non-parallel language systems (Wagner, 2016). Those scholars argue for a bidirectional bilingual (Dworin, 2003), or holistic bilingual approach (Grosjean, 2010; Wagner, 2016) which use children's L1 to support literacy learning in the L2 (Gort, 2012; Manyak, 2006; Soltero-Gonzalez, 2009; Soltero-Gonzalez, Escamilla, & Hopewell, 2012) and integrates children's home languages and cultures into the writing curriculum (Zapata & Laman, 2016). For Renee, and other mainstream teachers who have received little professional training in holistic bilingual instruction and do not speak the L1s of their DLLs, such an approach could be challenging without additional guidance but certainly beneficial for children.

Thus, we present an important implication of this study. Further research is needed to determine the similarities and differences between DLLs' and native English speakers' writing development, so early childhood educators can provide students the most appropriate instruction. In turn, those practitioners will need high-quality professional development in bilingual practices that reflect the field's research evidence and current knowledge, which demonstrates ways in which mainstream teachers can incorporate bilingual practices in a classroom such as Renee's (Taylor, Bernhard, Garg, & Cummins, 2008; Zapata & Laman, 2016). Wagner (2016) synthesized much of the research on holistic bilingual writing instruction for DLLs and suggested that teachers provide (a) inclusionary writing tasks that allow students to draw upon experiences from their native languages and cultures, (b) offer opportunities for children to participate in social writing processes with peers, parents, and community members, and (c) accept varied writing products (i.e., monolingual, bilingual, and multimodal texts) that allow children to draw from the totality of their linguistic and cultural resources.

Similarly, this study demonstrates how a teacher's beliefs can mediate instruction, highlighting the importance of teacher knowledge, on-going professional development, and life-long learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Given the increasing numbers of DLLs in U.S. schools, it is imperative that mainstream teacher preparation programs, advanced programs of study, and school district professional development provide early childhood educators extensive training in bilingual instruction and differentiation practices, such as those Wagner (2016) outlined.

Our study also offers early childhood educators insight into specific tools and writing processes that can mediate DLLs' early literacy development, as well as evidence for the usefulness of guided participation in supporting students' learning and appropriation of those important conceptual tools (Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 2009). Guided practice has been shown to afford children essential opportunities to learn what was taught (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007).

We recognize that our study is grounded in a limited set of data, which was collected in a short timeframe and examined only the teacher's instruction. Future research needs to address these limitations to proffer a more complete analysis of writing instruction with DLLs in mainstream settings.

**Elizabeth Lowrance-Faulhaber** is a doctoral candidate in the Second Language Studies program in Educational Studies at the University of Cincinnati. Her primary research interest is early childhood literacy learning and instruction with emergent bilingual children.

**Cheri Williams** is Professor of Literacy and Second Language Studies at the University of Cincinnati, where she teaches courses and conducts research on emergent literacy development and PreK-2 reading and writing instruction. She has a particular interest in qualitative research methodologies and the ways in which theoretical frameworks inform the conduct and interpretation of research.

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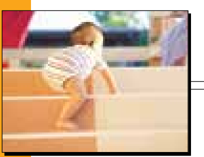



Editors Kenya Wolff and Wilma Robles-Melendez

# Maintaining a Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Environment for Infant and Toddlers

**By Claudia Alicia Castillo-Magallanez**

There is a large body of evidence that affirms infant and toddlers thrive in environments where they can have a secure connection with caring and responsive adults, where they feel safe and free to explore and learn. We have learned that creating a developmentally and culturally appropriate supportive learning environment for infant and toddlers entails time, reflection and planning (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). How do we ensure that we continue to maintain an environment where infants and toddlers continue to thrive?

The learning environment must be thoroughly assessed and reviewed on a regular basis. Early Childhood Educators can use various approaches and practices for reflecting on and further analyzing infant and toddler environments. One practice to use it to assess the environment using an environmental rating tool. The Infant-Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS; Cryer, Harms & Riley, 2004), is a familiar tool that many programs use, it can be completed quarterly to assess if the environment still meets the developmental needs of the children. Consider using various tools on a daily and monthly basis. This will assist with ensuring that the environment is designed to meet children's current and evolving skills while keeping in mind the suitability and safety of the environment. In conducting the evaluation consider the following:

- Ensure that space, furnishing, materials, interactions, activities and language used are suitable for inclusive and culturally diverse classroom (Cryer, Harms & Riley, 2004).
- The person conducting the evaluation should be objective and familiar with the program and the ages and stages of the children served.
- Evaluate all spaces used by the children this includes the classroom, playground, hallways and bathrooms. They must be developmentally appropriate addressing the needs of children in service.
- Consider a safe environment, be aware of infant and toddler evolving needs. Is the environment set up to help children move freely, investigate and play with materials that are durable and appropriate for their age and size?
- Make sure the environment is designed to support diversity. Consider exposing the children to different gender, ethnicity, language, ability, and occupational diverse materials.

Now that the assessment is completed, look at the data collected, analyze it and decide if there is a need for redesigning the environment to ensure it continues to support children's learning and development.

In conclusion, infant and toddlers devel-

op and grow rapidly, therefore Early Childhood Educators are obligated to be alert and foresee their actions and potential new hazards. Children are curious learners and are not aware of what is dangerous, assessing and reviewing children's environments regularly, will assist in ensuring it continues to support their curiosity, development and learning, to include a safe environment.

***Claudia Alicia Castillo-Magallanez** obtained a Master of Education in Early Childhood with Bilingual Specialization. She is a Professional Learning Consultant and an Adjunct Faculty at San Antonio College. She serves as the Membership and Communications Committee Leader for San Antonio Chapter of TXAEYC.*

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# Reading to Infants and Toddlers

**By Karen Walker**

It is never too early to begin reading to children! When very young children learn to associate reading with pleasure, they are more likely to enjoy reading on their own when they are older.

When reading to infants and toddlers, read with expression using different voices for different characters. Make reading a habit before naptime. Emphasize the rhymes and rhythms in the text, encouraging children to chime in. Ask children to make predictions such as "I wonder what will happen next?" Add books to your library that are interesting to the children in your classroom - families, animals, cars, etc. Allow children to "read" on their own. Yes, pages will be nibbled or occasionally torn, but sturdy board books are designed for little hands to explore. Read stories over again. Young children love repetition!

J.A. Barnes has written several *Show Me* books for infants and toddlers. *Show Me Your Day* is filled with colorful photos showing young children involved in daily activities. Infants love to look at faces! The infants and toddlers shown in this book represent diverse backgrounds. They are happily engaged in routines that all children would recognize - eating, waking up, playing outside. Encourage developing language and communication skills by encouraging children to point as you read. Say, "Let's point." Point and name the activity shown on the page. Place your hand over a child's and guide their index finger to point to the activity.

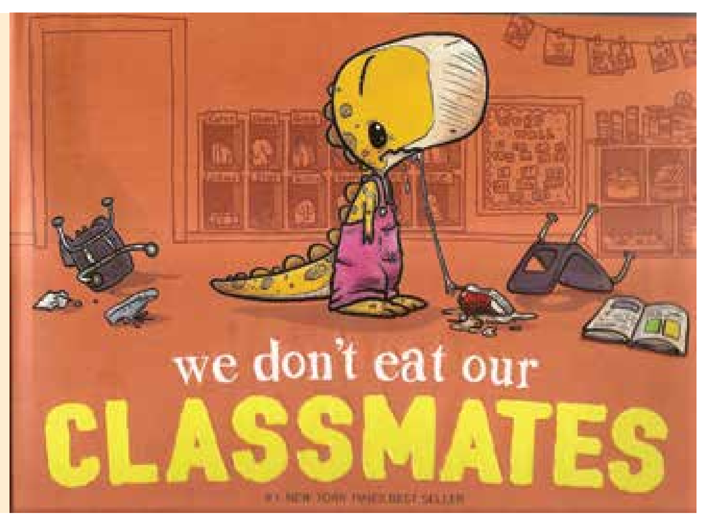
*El Abuelo* and *La Abuela* by Debbie Bailey are part of a series of Talk-About-Books designed to provide children an opportunity to see themselves and their families in the books they read. The books are filled with Susan Huszar's photographs of diverse children interacting with their Abuelos (grandfathers) and Abuelas (grandmothers). Grandparents play a special role in children's lives, binding generations and offering unique acceptance. Ask families to share photos of your students with their grandparents. Find out what your students call their grandparents. Hang these photos in your classroom so children can be surrounded with their love.

***Dr. Karen Walker** is an author and presenter on early childhood education. A native and current North Texan, she commutes to Natchitoches, LA where she is an assistant professor at Northwestern State University.*

*Children's Book Review*

# We Don't Eat Our Classmates

**By Dina Costa Treff**




*We Don't Eat Our Classmates* is Ryan T. Higgins' entertaining spin on an event that is typically filled with angst —the first day of school. Penelope Rex is hesitant about her first day of school. The typical beginning of school preparations takes place with a new backpack, discussions about lunch, and an overall curiosity of what to expect.  And the big question, what will her classmates be like? As the big day approaches, Penelope's uneasiness sets in as she realizes that she is the only T. Rex. She soon finds out that her innate nature of being a meat eater is not acceptable at school. Penelope then encounters the steps of becoming familiar with her peers and creating relationships with her classmates. However, Walter, the classroom pet, may have taught her the most valuable lesson of all. *We Don't Eat Our Classmates* is recommended for children ages 3-6.

Dina Costa Treff is Lead Teacher of the Preschool Program at the McPhaul Center, University of Georgia.

*El libro We Don't Eat Our Classmates* (No Comemos a Nuestros Compañeros de Clase) es el giro entretenido de Ryan T. Higgins en un evento que generalmente está lleno de angustia: el primer día de clases. Penélope Rex duda sobre su primer día de escuela. El comienzo típico de los preparativos escolares se lleva a cabo con una mochila nueva, discusiones sobre el almuerzo y una curiosidad general de qué esperar. Y la gran pregunta, ¿cómo serán sus compañeros de clase? A medida que se acerca el gran día, la inquietud de Penélope se establece cuando se da cuenta de que ella es la única T. Rex. Pronto descubre que su naturaleza innata de comer carne no es aceptable en la escuela. Penélope luego encuentra los pasos para familiarizarse con sus compañeros y crear relaciones con sus compañeros de clase. Sin embargo, Walter, la mascota del salón de clases, puede haberle enseñado la lección más valiosa de todas. *We Don't Eat Our Classmates* se recomienda para niños de 3 a 6 años. El libro es publicado en inglés.

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