NCLR
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA

Latino Early Literacy Development

Strategies for Lifelong Learning and Success

Latino Early Literacy Development: Strategies for Lifelong Learning and Success

Edited By

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National Council of La Raza
Washington, DC

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization established in 1968 to reduce poverty and discrimination and improve life opportunities for Hispanic Americans. NCLR has chosen to work toward this goal through two primary, complementary approaches: (1) capacity-building assistance to support and strengthen Hispanic community-based organizations, and (2) applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy. NCLR strengthens these efforts with public information and media activities and special and international projects. NCLR is the largest constituency-based national Hispanic organization, serving all Hispanic nationality groups in all regions of the country, with more than 300 formal affiliates who together serve 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia - and a broader network of more than 35,000 groups and individuals nationwide - reaching more than four million Hispanics annually.

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The genesis of this publication was the work undertaken during the "Latino Scholars' Meeting" hosted by NCLR on January 23, 2003 as part of the Love to Read project, an effort to identify the barriers facing Latino families and children in developing early reading skills. This meeting convened some of the top scholars and practitioners in Latino early care and education from around the country; their expertise and insight established the foundation for this piece. Participating in that meeting were: Maria Benjan, Director of Bank Street College for Education's Center for Universal Pre-K; Lynson M. Beaulieu, now the Senior Consultant for Early Childhood and K-12 Education, National Black Child Development Institute (former Director of Educational Equity for La Causa, Inc.); Laura Annunziata, Director of the Early Childhood Program for the Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center (now CentroNía); Cristina Encinas, Principal of the Latin American Youth Center; Costanza Eggers-Pierola, Senior Associate of Research and Development for the University of California, Los Angeles; Kris Gutiérrez, Professor at the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles; Naomi Karp, Research Program Analyst for the Institute of Educational Sciences; Carlos Juan Marrero, Education Consultant; Ivelisse Martínez-Beck, Policy Fellow with the Child Care Bureau; Michale L. López, Head Senior Social Science Research Analyst for the Administration for Children and Families; Beth Ann Bryan, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education; Judith Bernhard, Fulbright Scholar at Florida State Atlantic University; Rebeca María Barrera, Director of Gateway to College at Palo Alto College and founder of the National Latino Children's Institute; Jeanette Betancourt, Assistant Vice President of Education and Research for the Sesame Workshop; Manda López, Executive Director of the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association; Rozita La Gorce, Executive Vice President of the National Black Child Development Institute; and Sonya Posey, Senior Director for Program Support and Development for the National Black Child Development Institute.

As a result of this meeting, NCLR commissioned papers that would analyze the research and practices on early literacy development as they pertain particularly to Latino children and families. We are most grateful to the four scholars who committed their time to writing the pieces included here: Rebeca María Barrera, Jeanette Betancourt, Lily Wong Fillmore, and Graciela Italiano-Thomas. Their work contributes to closing the research gap and bringing increased attention to a much-needed dialogue concerning Latino children and early learning.

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The papers presented here reflect the views of their authors and may not necessarily represent the views of NCLR or its funders.

Foreword

"Education is the most important issue to the Latino community." This has been stated, or written, so often that it has almost become a cliché. But it still bears repeating because it is one of those rare statements that reflects an absolute, universally-accepted truth.

Researchers, analysts, and activists from all points of the political and ideological spectrum recognize that increasing the educational achievement of Latino students is the single most important thing we can do to improve the socioeconomic status of Hispanics. Opinion polls of Latinos confirm that the community itself believes that education is the key to opening the doors of opportunity in our country.

The actions of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and its 300-plus affiliates also reflect this reality. NCLR's Center for Community Educational Excellence is our single largest program component, and NCLR's community-based affiliate organizations operate education programs more than any other type of activity.

Indeed, this is also a deeply personal issue for me. My parents came to this country speaking little English and with only modest education, but they instilled in their children an unshakeable belief in the power of education. There is no doubt in my mind that my own educational experiences have given me opportunities that were unheard of in my parents' generation. I believe that those of us fortunate enough to have received a sound education have an obligation to do everything in our power to ensure similar opportunities for future generations.

I cannot think of a better place to start than making sure that every Latino starts school with a solid foundation in reading. Research shows that literacy is a fundamental building block for educational success – most of those who cannot read early in life never catch up. Because many Hispanic children come from backgrounds that result in little or no exposure to the written English word, more than any other group Latinos stand to benefit from early reading programs. Unfortunately, our community still lacks access to early childhood education programs, and many such programs lack the capacity to effectively teach reading to our children, in part because insufficient attention has been given to developing instructional approaches and materials tailored to the educational needs of young Latino learners.

That is why we assembled a distinguished group of scholars to help us chart a new course in expanding early literacy opportunities for our community. The result is this compendium of papers addressing the issue from multiple perspectives. Some may find their findings unsettling, even alarming. Others may disagree with some of the opinions expressed. But anyone interested in ensuring the educational success of Hispanic Americans – and that should include everyone interested in the future of our country – will benefit from the expertise, insights, and suggestions included in this volume.

Although this document represents the culmination of an effort that predates my arrival as President and CEO of NCLR, I can guarantee that it represents just the beginning of our work in this field. Looking to the future, we should be comforted that this is not one of those issues that divides Americans along partisan lines. Several years ago I was lucky enough to be in the White House when then-First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton launched a groundbreaking series of events highlighting new scientific research confirming the importance of early learning. And just a few weeks ago I was fortunate to be able to discuss with First Lady Laura Bush her deep commitment to expanding early literacy opportunities for all children, including Hispanic Americans. I am heartened by their support, which gives me great optimism that we can overcome the considerable challenges we face.

I invite every reader of this work to join us in making sure that today's young Latinos, and every generation that follows, start school not only with a willingness to learn, but with the solid foundation in literacy that will enable them to learn.

Janet Murguia

Washington, DC

Introduction

This collection of papers is a call to engage parents, early childhood educators, and community advocates in dialogue that affirmatively builds on a national movement for promoting early literacy – reading and language development – among Latino children. In the last two decades most states, numerous school districts, dozens of private foundations, and the federal government have directed resources into the development and implementation of ambitious early literacy and reading initiatives throughout the country. Besides giving all children the chance to succeed in school, reading initiatives also aim to reduce disparities and long-standing academic achievement gaps between groups. Despite significant investments, these efforts have been largely unsuccessful in reaching and inspiring Latino families to embrace and adopt early reading strategies.

In the face of research consistently showing that Latino parents believe that education provides the means to a better life for their children and the central role that reading plays in ensuring academic success, it is imperative that reading advocates come to understand the factors that inhibit reading behaviors among Latino families. To that end, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), with the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, commissioned a series of papers from, and convened a roundtable of, expert Latino scholars and practitioners to discuss the factors that inhibit Latino parents from increasing home-based reading behaviors and other early literacy activities with their young children. Through presentations of current research and vigorous dialogue, these scholars shared insights and identified strategies for reaching Latino families with culturally- and linguistically-appropriate approaches and made recommendations for closing the reading gap.

The Challenge

Remarkably little early literacy research is currently focused on Latino children and their families despite the fact that Hispanics constitute 22% of all children under the age of five in the United States. Further, there exist large gaps in the literature related to the nature of first- and second-language influences on early literacy development and school readiness among young Latino children. Similarly, there is little research and few practical models on how Spanish-speaking parents in this country can support the literacy development of their children. NCLR's community of scholars pointed to the need to understand the *factors that negatively impact the ability of Spanish-speaking parents to promote and engage in early literacy activities, with an emphasis on what they can do in their own language.* These factors include the lack of culturally- and linguistically-appropriate child care and preschool programs; lack of community resources such as libraries with Hispanic-focused materials or Spanish-language collections; inadequate availability of relevant and appropriate children's radio and television programs; and lack of child and family cultural and community events that stimulate language development.

More recently, the federal No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in 2002, increased the sense of urgency to improve reading achievement. It set a goal that all students become proficient in English and math by 2014. Each year, states are required to report progress

toward that goal by measuring students' performance on standardized tests. Schools are held accountable not only for overall student performance, but for reducing the size of gaps between groups. The effect on early reading efforts was to look for educational gaps at earlier and earlier stages in the system. Ultimately, educators and policy-makers have turned their attention to early childhood education and families and determined that many children, including Latino children, aren't "ready to learn" when they enter kindergarten. Researchers concur; reading and math gaps exist before children ever enter public school.

Kindergarten was seen, until relatively recently, as the time during which children prepared for academic work. The goal of kindergarten was to expand children's oral language and vocabulary skills in preparation for first grade, when they would be introduced to reading and writing. Today, in most states, the expectation is that children arrive at kindergarten with a basic foundation of knowledge, "school-appropriate" behaviors, and skills that once were expected for first grade. As a result, participation in high-quality preschool has become increasingly important for preparing children to be ready for school.

Given that Hispanics under age five are less likely than other groups (20%) to be enrolled in early childhood education programs,* Latino parents must be armed with the knowledge, skills, and resources to prepare their children for school via intentional use of early literacy activities available to them. While there is a growing movement throughout the country toward universal preschool, for millions of children it will arrive too late, and their parents, families, and communities must be prepared to be the literacy champions for them. In order to meet this challenge, parents need information, tools, and resources. They need information on what will be expected of their children and what it means to be *ready for school*, and what early literacy is and what they can do every day to offer these experiences to their children. Parents also need to be empowered to embrace their home language and culture and use it to build a foundation for experiences, and they need to know that they "are doing the right thing." Finally, parents need to know how to advocate for literacy resources in their public libraries and community institutions, both public and private.

What Parents and Educators Can Do

The papers included in this collection provide parents and educators with information, a rationale, and suggested activities that they can use from the moment children are born to begin to help children learn about the world. Latino families will learn that research on brain development and early childhood learning has linked the benefits of nurturing family relationships – so important among Latino families – to the construction of a foundation for

* "Latinos in School: Some Facts and Findings," *ERIC Digest*, Number 162 <http://www.ericdigests.org/2001-3facts.htm>

all of a child's later growth and development. The papers present research-based, family-friendly, and culturally-appropriate strategies that parents and educators can use to promote reading and cognitive development. Parents will come to appreciate that oral traditions such as storytelling in the context of their history and culture are powerful stimuli for the imagination, help to increase children's vocabularies, introduce children to essential elements of stories (such as character, plot, action, and sequence), and provide them with concepts about the world around them. By infusing their children's world with culturally-appropriate songs and verse, parents can advance a love of language through the rhythms of language and encourage phonological awareness, which can be an important predictor of later literacy learning. Parents are encouraged to advance the family heritage and traditions they hold dear through storytelling and natural conversations that explore values such as *cariño, atención, respeto, responsibilidad,* and *compromiso* (love, attention, respect, responsibility, and commitment). These daily interactions and conversations sustain and nurture children's development for life and for literacy.

In the first paper, *Dispelling the Myth*, Rebeca María Barrera examines this question: Given the many examples of great Latino literature and intense interest by Latinos in books, how, then, can we explain the shocking data regarding low literacy levels in the Latino community? Ms. Barrera examines the barriers faced by real people in real communities and shares the struggles and successes that can serve as inspiration and models for other parents and educators throughout the country. In "getting to the root of the myth," she addresses in concrete and practical terms the myths that parents and educators need to examine and dispel. Ms. Barrera speaks to what parents can do and what communities must do to take action – to mobilize neighborhoods and communities to develop broad, multidimensional initiatives that promote Latino literacy campaigns.

In *"El gusto" of Language and Literacy Development*, Dr. Jeanette Betancourt discusses strategies that are available to parents of infants and toddlers to promote language development in their primary language. She discusses what parents need to know about how children learn to "play with language," and that through language play children learn that the same thing can have different names. This early lesson in abstraction gives those who are bilingual the mental flexibility and openness that produces cognitive and social benefits. The ability to switch linguistic codes and eventually think in more than one language increases conceptual development. This cognitive flexibility begins with the first coo of an infant.

In *The Effects of Educational Policies and Practices on Home Languages and Learning*, Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore explores the consequences of parents not fully understanding the importance of home language for a child's academic success and family life. She discusses the questions: How does the loss of a primary language affect children, their families, and the larger society? What has led to the acceleration of language loss, and should policy-makers, children's advocates, and educators be worried about it? What steps can be taken to lessen the negative consequences of language loss? Dr. Fillmore's powerful and

poignant descriptions draw us into the world of families struggling between languages, of children without a language they can call their own. As parents examine and come to understand these issues fully, they can use this knowledge to fuel their *ganas*, or their will, to embrace their home language and heritage, confident that it is the right thing to do to prepare their children for school and for life.

In *Juguemos con el lenguaje: The Joy of Talking with Young Children*, Dr. Graciela Italiano-Thomas shares strategies with teachers which they can use to create early reading environments that are respectful of and consistent with a child's culture and language. Dr. Italiano-Thomas offers a wealth of strategies, examples, and resources that teachers can use to encourage families to take advantage of their family knowledge and culture to access community resources as the foundation for later reading activities in both English and Spanish.

Finally, we hope that this collection will contribute to a deep appreciation of parents' inherent capacity to draw upon their experiences in giving their children a strong foundation of early literacy and reading. Parents' success, however, can be greatly enhanced by access to information and practical examples and strategies that reveal how primary language is connected to early literacy and, ultimately, school readiness. Educators and policy-makers are cautioned, however. The very efforts designed to promote English reading activities may actually create obstacles for families and lessen their capacity to promote reading activities. When the emphasis is focused on English-language "reading" for parents whose first language is not English, the effort may prevent parents from being able to do what they *can* do – which is considerable – in their own language. Parents who are constantly told to embrace practices they simply cannot implement, such as "read to your child every day for at least 20 minutes," "read in English," "play phonics games," "and "surround your child with books and print activities in their daily life," may simply become overwhelmed and discouraged. Unexamined or unreasonable expectations may lead to judgments that affect the confidence and self-image of parents and ultimately undermine their ability to act on the strategies that are available to them.

Latino parents, like all parents, must be encouraged to build early literacy environments for their children based on their own interests, skills, aptitudes, preferences, values, and traditions. Parents, literate and nonliterate, contribute greatly to their children's early literacy education when they enjoy and expand conversations with their children, promoting traditional and contemporary song, verse, poetry, humor, jokes, riddles, proverbs, and other word games. Parents can promote the development of ideas and intellectual concepts when they engage their children in thoughtful, joyful discovery of the world of words in which they live each day. This is the vision that underlies the messages delivered so eloquently by the authors of this collection.

Dispelling the Myth

Rebeca María Barrera, MA
Palo Alto College

It is a myth that Latinos do not love to read.

There is no other explanation for why the rain-drenched Latinos were standing in a line that wrapped around the Manhattan city block where the Lectorum Bookstore is located. They had come to the book signing for Jorge Ramos' book *Atravesando Fronteras*, of which more than 4,000 copies were sold that day. I saw it myself, or I too might have believed the myth.

I asked the people who were waiting in line to meet Jorge Ramos, "Why are you willing to stand in the rain for hours to have your book autographed?" Many had done this before to meet Carlos Fuentes, Sandra Cisneros, and Isabel Allende. They answered in a variety of accents and intonation patterns, reminiscent of their hometowns in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, and Spain. Each person said in his or her own way, "Jorge Ramos writes about me, my experience, my life. I long for books about the Latino story."

Across the country in Los Angeles, I was fortunate to participate in the first Edward Olmos Book and Family Festival. Over the two-day festival, thousands of Latinos walked through the turnstile at the entrance, clicking the counter as they passed, the number skyrocketing beyond 17,000. Thousands – *hombres, mujeres, y niños* – sat in awe as poets read their rhythmic lines and authors penned their autographs into the title pages of their books, such as Rodolfo Anaya who signed copies of *Bless Me Ultim*a and *Alburquerque*. Hours later as they left the event, festival-goers' arms were loaded with books on every topic from gardening to literature to parenting. Rubén Martínez, owner of Martínez Books, sold every book in his exhibit. As he rolled empty bookcases out of the dock to his truck, he said, "I have always known Latinos love to read. Now, everybody will know."

I saw this too, or I might have continued to believe the myth.

Dozens of government reports and academic studies have helped create a widely believed notion that the Latino community is illiterate and uninterested in books, and, as a result, has the highest dropout rate in the country. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, "by age nine, Hispanics lag behind their non-Hispanic peers in reading."[1] Another report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2000 indicates that 58% of Latino fourth graders read below the basic level, making it difficult for them to read and comprehend simple text.[2]

The data are accurate. There is a serious reading issue to tackle, but it is not because Latinos do not love books and stories.

Storytelling is as old a tradition in the Latino culture as are the ruins of pyramids in Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru. The ruins themselves are a testament to the efforts of Maya and Aztec ancestors to preserve their stories through the use of an elaborate codex system carved on the walls of every structure.

Eons before there were paperback racks in every airport and bestseller lists in newspapers, there were storytellers who passed along the history of families from generation to

generation throughout what we know today as Latin America. In Spain, Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra captivated the world with his epic novel *Don Quixote*. Four hundred fifty years later, his work is celebrated as a long-running Broadway musical in the U.S., while each year the entire city of Guanajuato, Mexico transforms into the International Cervantes Festival. This *Cervantino* festival is the most important artistic and cultural event in Mexico and has been held without interruption since 1972. Similar events throughout the Americas recognize the work of poets, authors, historians, and storytellers.

There are many examples of great Latino literature and intense interest by Latinos in books. How, then, can we explain the shocking data regarding low literacy levels in the Latino community?

Barriers at Every Turn

Along with the language and cultural obstacles that Latinos face every day, there are other barriers that are even more challenging, such as poverty, isolation, misinformation, and lack of access.

My exploration of these barriers began unexpectedly with a problem at a small Texas public library. I received an email requesting assistance from several mothers who wanted to establish a Spanish story time on Saturday mornings. One of the mothers was a story reader at the local library where more and more children attending the story time were conversing in Spanish. She invited a second mother, who was bilingual, to help her communicate with the Spanish-speaking children. As the word spread that there was a bilingual volunteer available to translate, more Spanish-speaking children started coming to the library. Eventually, there were so many children attending the story time, it became obvious that there should be two groups, one for each language.

The two women approached the library director about establishing a scheduled Spanish story time since there were already several in English. The bilingual mother volunteered to do the session so that it wouldn't cost the library an additional staff person. Instead of embracing the idea, the director denied the request saying that the library wasn't interested in a Spanish story time.

Six hours away in San Antonio, Texas, I found another example of the obstacles that Latinos face. San Antonio is a city of a million and a half souls, 57% of whom are Hispanic and most of whom are concentrated in the city's west and south sides.[3] While bookstores are liberally sprinkled throughout the north side of the city, there is not one bookstore south of downtown. Findings from one national survey[4] suggest that as many as 58% of San Antonio's population is functionally illiterate, meaning that they can complete basic tasks such as scanning newspaper articles and completing forms, but cannot use printed documents for critical work tasks. The implication is that "the community won't buy enough books to generate the desired profitability level."

Yet, students from South San Antonio High School have been trying for six years to attract a bookstore to the predominately Hispanic south side of San Antonio. They have written petitions and held poetry readings and book events at the local mall where thousands of people lined up for the Books in the Barrio event. The students made presentations to the Chamber of Commerce and wrote letters to every major book company they could find. Every request was rejected with a statement that the local demographics did not meet corporate requirements for establishing a bookstore franchise.

Finally, the students' hard work and constant correspondence with book retail companies paid off. A Waldenbooks opened in July 2004. According to the local mall director, "We couldn't just say, 'We want a bookstore.' We had to prove we needed it."

In another community along the U.S.-Mexico border there are two bookstores: one on campus at the university and the other at the local mall. The campus bookstore is dedicated solely to the required texts for classes. The mall store, on the other hand, is designed to market best sellers to the general public. Shoppers visit the store to purchase books for their children or as birthday presents for other children. The children's section fills two bookcases with all the latest copies of *Star Wars*, *Arthur*, and The *Magic School Bus*. The Spanish children's section is 15 inches wide, holding about 20 books, mostly translated copies of *Clifford the Big Red Dog's Great Adventures*. Pat Mora's delightful poetry is missing. There are no copies of Diane Gonzáles Bertrand's heartwarming bilingual *Family/Familia*, and there are no versions in English or Spanish of any of Gary Soto's fun-loving stories. With the home language of most border citizens being Spanish, the community finds itself "left out" of the offerings at the local bookstore. The store manager says that decisions regarding inventory are made at the corporate headquarters in another state. Shoppers we interviewed that day said, "I can't find what I want here" and "I have to go out of town to buy the books I want for my children."

At every turn there is an obstacle that prevents Latinos from acquiring the books they want, and when the obstacles are removed, Latinos young and old line up by the thousands, hungry for the rhythm of poetry and the captivating stories by Julia Álvarez, Rubén Darío, and Gabriel García Márquez.

Although the statistics are dim and literacy among Latinos is low, one cannot conclude that Latinos don't want to read. Latinos want to embrace the love of reading – they just need a little help to get past the obstacles.

Getting to the Root of the Myth

Reading offers entertainment, information, and opportunities for learning about the world. For young children, reading is essential for school success. Research findings indicate that reading to young children promotes language acquisition, which correlates to literacy development.[5] These two skills are important indicators of school success. It is understood that children who are read to will grow up to be readers themselves. The rule of thumb is that young children should participate in 1,000 hours of reading by the

time they are five years old. Reading is one way to expand vocabulary, and it is estimated that half the words that children will use throughout their life, about 6,000, will be learned by the time they are six years old.

White non-Hispanic children are more likely than Hispanic or Black non-Hispanic children to have someone who reads to them every day. While 73% of children whose mothers were college graduates were read to every day in 2002, and 60% of children whose mothers had some postsecondary education were read to, only 42% of Latino children were read to daily.[6] The underlying premise that readers become graduates and graduates read to their children cannot be true for Hispanics as long as the high school completion rate does not increase.

Another important indicator of school success is participation in quality early childhood education programs where enrichment activities provide opportunities to develop or improve basic skills. Once again, Latino children fare worse on this indicator than other groups, with only 40% participating in early childhood education programs compared to 70% of children of college graduates, 64% of Black children, and 59% of non-Hispanic White children.[7]

The staff of the National Latino Children's Institute recently began to explore the reading barriers that Latinos face in order to find more effective strategies for community organizations to increase reading among young Latinos.[8] Focus groups and interviews with families and educators in California's Bay Area and in South Texas' Rio Grande Valley resulted in a list of over a dozen barriers ranging from language to poverty, mobility, transportation, and limited access to culturally authentic books. Educators in the group felt that reading was not a priority for families while parents explained the difficulties of managing two jobs and living in multigenerational homes with no space for quiet time.

These are just a few of the reasons that Latinos have given for the low levels of reading in their community. In order to reverse the trend everyone will need to become engaged in changing attitudes, providing information, making books accessible, and breaking down barriers. The entire community must own the problem. Retail merchants, elected officials, religious leaders, health care professionals, employers, educators, the media, families, and young Latinos must all be involved in creating a community that reads.

The following is a list of the most common reasons why young Latinos are not read to on a daily basis:

Reading is not a priority	With poverty levels at the highest rate for Latinos, many parents find themselves holding more than one job in order to support their family. The urgency of acquiring tennis shoes and school supplies for a second-grader while squeezing in grocery shopping, a trip to the doctor, or paying bills into an already tight schedule takes precedence over many other family activities. Families who don't have information about the importance of reading to young children don't understand that they should prioritize this activity in their very busy lives.
Did not experience being read to as a child	A number of Latinos stated that no one read to them when they were children. Now, as adults, they purchase books for their own children, but stated they didn't know how important it is to read with them. They recall childhood memories of sitting around an elder and listening to real stories about their own family. Several young parents assumed that story-sharing was an elder's role.
Unaware of the benefits	While there are many excellent resources available to English-speaking families about early brain development and the benefits of early literacy, information about these topics is not always available in Spanish. Translated brochures, videos, and other informative materials are rarely culturally appropriate and usually poorly disseminated.
Few bilingual or culturally authentic books available	Many publishers import books from Spain, Argentina, and other countries, but teachers say children long for culturally authentic books about their American Latino experience. Some of the international books are as foreign to young American Latinos as a U.S. book that ignores their culture. Recent efforts by REFORMA,[9] the Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, have resulted in increased attention by publishers to the Latino children's market. Scholastic, the world's largest publisher of children's books, has ramped up its Spanish-language publishing while culture-focused publishers such as Arte Público Press, Lee and Low Books, and Children's Book Press steadily crank out exciting new books. Despite these efforts, the emerging market opportunity continues to be unmet and Latino children have few choices in bookstores.
No library cards	Books are available free through libraries, but many Latinos have commented that their previous experiences with institutions such as schools and hospitals have been difficult. They recall incidents of disrespect and intimidation and fear institutional intrusion into their lives. They resist getting a library card to avoid giving out personal information. Migrant families find it especially difficult to visit libraries because they do not have permanent residences and therefore are ineligible for library cards.

Limited access to free books or libraries	Many Latino families that frequent libraries commented that they find wonderful nonfiction books of general interest, but few books that are culturally authentic or bilingual. Others comment that there are few libraries where they live, or that library budgets are so tight that they are closed on weekends when families who work can visit the library with their children.
Library acquisition policies are complex	Libraries purchase books that have hard covers and special binding for extra durability. The books are usually more expensive and purchased only through city-approved vendors. Even authors find it difficult to donate copies of their books to libraries because of the special publishing and cataloging requirements. It would be very complex for publishers to communicate directly with every municipal government in the U.S. to register for the vendor process. As a result, most publishers sell books to libraries through authorized book distributors that already have established vendor relationships. The vendors' booklists include best sellers and books by popular authors. Only Latino books by previously established authors make it to the vendor booklists that libraries use for ordering books.
No bookstores or places to purchase books nearby	High school completion rates, college education, and economic status are some of the criteria used by chain bookstores to determine where they will set up a new store. Since Latinos have among the highest poverty rates, their neighborhoods are rarely selected for new book businesses. Independent business leaders are more likely to set up Latino-focused bookstores. Among the best known are Martínez Books in Santa Ana, California, Iaconi Books in San Francisco, California, and Lectorum Bookstore in Manhattan, New York. These stores cater to Spanish-speaking readers as well as English readers seeking cultural products. Martínez Books serves as a community center hosting voter registration events, art shows, and author signings, thereby proving that the most effective Latino community bookstore serves many purposes. Many good books are now available through companies selling books over the Internet. While the opportunities are growing, the digital divide continues to be greater for Hispanics than other groups, so this may not offer a quick solution.
Do not know how to select books	The phrase "Don't judge a book by its cover" offers insight into the confusion in choosing appropriate children's books for each age group. Parents don't know whether books with more words are more useful than those that are highly illustrated, whether the themes will interest boys or girls, or whether the reading level is appropriate.

	Children need access to all kinds of books including picture books, storybooks, biographies, how-to books, science and nonfiction books, and dictionaries. A good bibliography can help with making book choices. To address this concern, Dr. Isabel Schon founded the Barhona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents.[10] She has compiled extensive bilingual bibliographies, yet Latino families in discussion groups held by the National Latino Children's Institute were unaware of this excellent on-line resource.[11] Even the educators who were not literacy experts had no idea that such a resource existed or could be helpful.
Children not interested	Some parents in the discussion groups felt that children spend too much time watching television and playing computer games. Others suggested that television is a fast-paced experience and that children get so "wound up" that they can't sit still for long periods. They said that children don't know how to read a book. Children are very interested in reading when they understand what is expected of them. Reading a book is a learned skill that requires more than listening to a story. Adults must practice reading skills such as left to right progression and turning pages with children. Reading requires thoughtful review of the story line and comprehension of words. The correct pronunciation and meaning of new words can be challenging, yet fun. Reading is not meant to be rushed.
Embarrassed to read aloud	Some educators in the group indicated that parents are reluctant to read out loud because their own reading skills are so poor. For these families teachers recommended storytelling, yet parents still felt insecure and, as a result, dismissed the value of books.
Reading is for school, not home	The concept "parents are the child's first teacher" was a surprise to some parents. Some parents felt that their children were too young for books and that values were the most important thing to learn in the early years while still at home. The concept, *bien educado*, or well mannered, was a bigger goal for all the parents in the group.[12] One parent described how important it was to teach social skills during the early years since this would not be taught in school. Parents were surprised that children were expected to have so many school readiness skills upon entering first grade.

What Works?

Early literacy is essential to later school success and eventual participation in the workforce. Community leaders know that a prepared workforce is the foundation for the economic stability of a society. Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population and in the next ten years will make up the second-largest segment of the workforce. With 35% of Latinos under the age of 18, the economic future of the United States will be dependent on the capacity of these Latino children as they grow up. The urgency of developing a literate Latino community cannot be overlooked.

In the midst of these alarmingly negative statistics, exemplary groups have developed outstanding solutions that incorporate the Latino community's values and strengths to address the literacy problem. In each case, unique solutions were found to remove barriers and promote literacy. The following case studies describe the process each program used to develop the perfect strategy for its target audience.

Libros y Familias

In recent years, the public schools in Independence, Oregon have seen the rise of Spanish-speaking migrant workers who have settled in the community. Primarily Mexican, these families found themselves isolated from their children's education system. The *Libros y Familias* program was developed in the elementary school to encourage families to spend more time reading with their children, increase the use of local libraries, and raise self-esteem and pride. The program is based on the belief that education is a family affair and that, in order for children to succeed in school, the whole family must be involved. The program uses quality Spanish literature to empower parents to help their children progress. It stresses sharing life experiences and validates the life of migrant parents as relevant and valuable events worth sharing with their children.

As part of this effort, a bilingual facilitator helps adults recall their own experiences and turns these into short stories. Students are then invited to illustrate the stories, which are eventually published as books. Families are presented copies of the books so they can read them to their children. Each month, a different book that sparks a personal connection and stimulates conversation about personal experiences is featured.

According to Dr. Dick Keis, *Libros y Familias* program director, families who never volunteered to read aloud before now read with confidence. Children are proud to illustrate their parents' words and are eager to learn what book will be used at the next meeting. Visits from prominent Latino authors such as George Ancona, Isabel Campoy, Omar Castañeda, and Alma Flor Ada provide a highlight each year.

Although *Libros y Familias* has been extremely successful, there were many obstacles in the beginning. One of the biggest problems was convincing families to trust the public school system. Gaining the support of non-Latino teachers was also difficult,

since they felt the program was just for Hispanics. Furthermore, since the premise of the program is nontraditional, funding sources to purchase books are limited and presented another challenge.

Día de los Niños, Día de los Libros

Inspired by the prodding of author and poet Pat Mora, Reforma members convinced the American Library Association to organize book festivals, author signings, and other special events in libraries on April 30 each year. *El Día del Niño,* celebrated April 30, is the most widely celebrated holiday in Mexico. Here in the U.S., *El Día de los Niños – Celebrating Young Americans* is recognized by the U.S. Senate and celebrated in more than 150 communities. Cities are encouraged to add book events to their celebrations, and the work of REFORMA to establish *El Día de los Niños – Día de los Libros* has created an excellent model for bringing books to children's lives.

Mora's goal to emphasize the value of books and the power of words has had a significant impact on the library system. Dozens of libraries in cities such as Raleigh, North Carolina; Austin, Texas; Portland, Oregon; and El Paso, Texas have begun to reach out to Latino children through a holiday that is culturally rich and already familiar to them. With a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the American Library Association has developed a website that provides information and support to libraries throughout the country. A brochure aimed at parents features a list of books about Latinos, with tips on how to read to very young children. A national poster is developed annually to promote the observance of this special day.

Centro de la Familia de Utah

The 500 children of the Migrant Head Start program managed by Centro de la Familia de Utah share their learning experiences with their families. Primarily from the Texas-Mexico border, the families travel to Utah each summer to harvest cherries, apricots, onions, and potatoes. They stay in Utah until the fall, or they can extend their stay until December by working in the packing plants. The children in the program are from five weeks to five years old. Ninety-five percent of the families speak Spanish and all of them want to learn English, recognizing that it is the language of economic success in this country. However, parents who tried to participate in traditional GED classes were disappointed and dropped out after facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Concerned about the language barriers and educational challenges facing these families, the staff planned family nights that would emphasize the strengths of the culture. Using reflective listening skills, the staff began to understand the many obstacles that the families faced. A narrative approach was developed to create opportunities for families to share their life stories. These stories about crossing the border and the long trek across the country to work in Utah became the focus of the adult curriculum. According to Graciela Italiano-Thomas, former Chief Executive

Officer, Centro de la Familia de Utah is successful because it starts with families at their level. It creates a bridge between the cultural values of the family and those of Head Start.

Each family night includes opportunities to share stories, read books, partake of familiar foods, and set goals for the family. The staff provide information about how children learn and the value of bilingual education. Traditional nursery rhymes, riddles, songs, poetry, and verses are introduced, and parents practice reciting them to help children expand their language and early literacy skills. Even parents who can't read find a way to help their children learn by using these verbal strategies. As the families advance in their home language, learning English becomes easier.

Home visits, videotaping, and book construction follow the family nights. Incentives, such as washable crayons and free books, encourage continuous parent involvement at the center and at home. The program provides transportation and child care for infants to minimize barriers to parent participation. Sometimes the whole family participates, including grandparents and older siblings.

Centro de la Familia de Utah values the traditions of the families it serves and uses these traditions as a vehicle for learning. Since the culture is valued, families feel they have a place to celebrate. Library books reinforce traditional holidays, and occasionally special days such as *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) are observed with the building of altars and baking of *pan de muerto* (bread).

Centro de la Familia de Utah has developed the perfect strategy for removing obstacles to early literacy. It features the family life as the center of curriculum.

These three case studies share common elements that should be explored carefully by organizations seeking to remove barriers to literacy for young Latinos. In each case, the primary strategy includes valuing the culture by using the strengths of the Latino family as a means of reaching literacy goals. None of the programs makes a distinction between English or Spanish, emphasizing instead the expansion of vocabulary and verbal skills in both languages.

Taking Action

The need for developing Latino children's literacy skills is so urgent that a concerted national effort must be organized. There are many organizations and institutions that focus on literacy, yet few have developed the capacity to overcome the cultural barriers that Latinos face. Improving the opportunities for early literacy among Latino children will require marshalling the resources of many groups including non-Latino organizations. Everyone must be involved. Everyone can help.

Plans must be developed for broad, multidimensional initiatives that include public awareness and information, special events to draw attention to the issues, access to books and libraries, and family involvement strategies. At the heart of every plan there must be

respect for the values and unique circumstances of the Latino family. There must be an understanding of the barriers faced at every turn.

The programs and leaders described in this paper have proven that no obstacle is too great for Hispanic parents where their children's education is concerned. They have established exemplary models that work and have challenged the nation to recognize that the Latino culture is not a barrier, but the best asset for overcoming the gaps in Latino literacy. They have dispelled the myth.

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1 National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education*, 1999, Indicator 1, 2, 4-6.

2 Donahue, P. L., A. D. Finnegan, and N. L. Lutkus, *The Nation's Report Card: Fourth Grade Reading* 2001, U.S. Department of Education, NCES. Washington, DC, 2001.

3 U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates by Race and Hispanic Origin, July 1, 2002.

4 2002 National Adult Literacy Survey.

5 America's Children: Key indicators of Well-Being, 2002 Indicator ED1.

6 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

7 America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002, Indicator ED2.

8 The National Latino Children's Institute met with 26 community leaders in the Bay Area in June 2003 as part of Scholastic's *Lee y serás* Initiative and with participants of the Success by Six Project in Brownsville, TX, February 2004.

9 REFORMA – The Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, contact the American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611, http://www.latino.sscnet.ucla.edu/library/reforma/index.htm

10 The Barhona Center is located at California State University San Marcos, Kellogg Library, 5th Floor, 333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Road, San Marcos, California 92096-0001.

11 Schon, I. *The Best of Latino Heritage: A Guide to the Best Juvenile Books about Latino People and Cultures.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003. ISBN 0-8108-4669-1. 269 pp.

12 *Bien educado* translates to "well educated," but means "well mannered and having family values."

"El gusto" of Language and Literacy Development

Jeanette Betancourt, Ed.D.
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Latino children develop "*el gusto*" or "the joy" of language and literacy development based on their everyday experiences. These experiences are generally tied within a cultural context, which cannot be separated from how children learn to express themselves, and they set the foundations for reading and writing. Establishing a philosophy upon which any household or child care program supports being bicultural and/or bilingual as an asset and as a way to foster children's language and literacy learning, along with an appreciation of who they are and the value of their experiences, is ideal. Assisting parents and caregivers to form partnerships to support these efforts is critical. Once there is a commitment by parents and caregivers to support *el gusto* of language and literacy learning in a way that supports biculturalism and bilingualism, the momentum is often unstoppable. Not only do adults benefit from this approach, but the difference it makes for Latino children during the early years is monumental, significantly influencing their positive perspectives about their own language(s) and culture. This approach fosters an innate joy and enthusiasm for learning which will last a lifetime!

How do children develop language and literacy during the first five years?

Suddenly there is a healthy cry in the delivery room! For the very first time, a mother and father get to see their beautiful baby. They carefully and tentatively stroke her and call her name, Catalina, and then murmur to her how beautiful she is, "¡Qué preciosa nuestra belleza!" *For an instant the crying stops, and little Catalina stares intently at her parents who lovingly keep murmuring how wonderful it is to have her enter into their lives. Catalina is then quickly whisked away to get her started on her new journey of learning which began the moment she was born!*

The enthusiasm for learning and communicating is never more obvious than during the first five years of life. The above scenario is a typical first language interaction between parents and children. It is where "*el gusto*"* or "the joy" of language† and literacy‡ development begins. These first interactions, which are generally responses to babies' first sounds, cries, smiles, and movements, all set the stage for a lifetime of learning. Such actions lead to creating a partnership between children and adults to develop and foster a pattern for communication. Infants begin to feel a sense of reassurance when they

* "El gusto" in this text is defined as the "joy" or "enthusiasm" of children at any age who are learning to express themselves and discovering a variety of ways to do so such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

† Language is defined as the ability to interactively communicate through listening, sounds, words, actions, as well as to gain increasing knowledge in understanding ideas and concepts and expressing them to others.

‡ Literacy is defined as the ability to listen and speak and sets the foundation for reading and writing in ways that are age-appropriate.

communicate, learning that their needs and wants will safely be met. In addition, adults learn to "know their infants" – the movements they make when they are tired, the cooing or quick smiles when they are held closely and cuddled, the fast arm movements that demonstrate excitement as a they are sung or read to by a parent's melodic voice, and cries which can indicate hunger, sleepiness, or many other things. These interactions foster and bind the relationship between infants and the loving adults who care for them.

Gradually, infants grow and become toddlers (one- to two-year-olds) and a whole new language world starts to emerge. Those small cooing sounds start to come together to make longer strings of gibberish that eventually begin to emerge as actual single words or two-word phrases. Suddenly, toddlers start to emphasize their needs and actions by pointing, using facial expressions and body movements, and most of all, using their voices! At times they scream with joy, while at other times cry with frustration.

This is the age of the "fantastically curious twos," when children's experiences spread beyond their immediate surroundings. Their world is getting bigger as they venture out; they are seeing and experiencing more things around them, not just within their neighborhoods but through television, books, toys, activities, and increasing interactions with other children and adults. Every new form of learning is met with excited squeals, cries of delight, and a desire to do more on their own. Toddlers are also developing ways to generalize and categorize information – for example, several different types of four-legged animals are grouped as "*wuaw-wuow*" or "bow-bow" and may eventually be labeled as "*perros*" or "dogs." As they begin to understand the differences within these categories, these "buckets of information" become more refined and increasingly more specific; toddlers gradually learn the words to label things more specifically, and their vocabulary and language use continues to increase. Children at this age are incredibly curious and want to imitate the world and adults they see around them. As children watch adults write, their desire to do the same thing grows. They endlessly ask for paper and crayons or pencils to scribble with or to make "drawings." Similarly, they are eager to imitate adults as they read to them – the way they turn the pages or point to the pictures. It is in these early stages of development when the foundation and interest for writing and reading are established.

Toddlers are also using language to express their points of view. Frequently, words such as "no," "I do it" (*yo hago*), or "mine" (*mio*) are typical expressions that children use to proclaim who they are, what they want, and what they know. This is also the age in which children understand so much more than they can actually put into words, which can be very frustrating for them at times. Their sense of purpose or determinedness is demonstrated by the words they use and the actions that follow; they appear entirely single-minded and often appear not to listen because they are so focused on doing what they set out to do. This may be why many adults may describe this phase of development as the "terrible twos." In reality it is just young children's way of asserting the joy of language learning and their desire to "use" this newfound knowledge with the adults

around them, to show what they are learning. Once again, the interaction and bond between children and adults is critical for toddlers to move successfully into the next stages of development – this relationship becomes the motivation for continued growth and communication.

As children progress from being toddlers to developing preschoolers (three- to five-year-olds), the link between language and literacy grows further. Preschoolers are now able to more effectively "express" their thoughts, questions, insights, and ideas. The key to this newfound knowledge is based on continued interactions and experiences between children and caring adults, specifically parents and caregivers. Children's experiences increasingly become more complex as they get older. They may enter a preschool or a family child care program or be cared for by a relative; they have increasing exposure to different media such as television, radio, computers, videos, movies, books, or magazines; they are forming more extensive friendships with peers or adults who share many similarities as well as differences with them; they may be increasingly exposed to larger areas of their neighborhoods, and in many cases beyond them, and other venues whereby the boundaries of their world continue to extend. These experiences require children to learn how to understand and express what they are seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and feeling in more complex ways.

Caring adults help children to do this by engaging them in conversations and helping them to understand and use the words related to these experiences. Preschoolers begin to string words together into larger and more complex sentences to express their ideas and can also engage in conversations in which there is a process of give and take (listening and speaking). This is often the stage in which children seem to exhaust adults by asking endless and difficult questions, often using "why" or "how." For example, "Why do the clouds stay up in the air?" or "Why does the moon move when I walk?" or "How do we make milk?" They have an intense curiosity to discover the why, the how, the what, and the where of things happening around them. As they receive answers from adults and peers to their endless questions, they are being provided with words, expressions, and ideas that connect to their experiences. It is also a time in which their desire for both routine and repetition appears fixed. Frequently, they request the same foods, books, or videos over and over for weeks on end. It may appear to adults who observe preschoolers that each time their children engage in this "same" activity it is a new experience. It actually is not, since preschoolers innately recognize that by repeating experiences over and over, they are learning the words, actions, and ideas they see and hear, time after time – they are reinforcing their own learning!

As their language development increases, so does their interest in literacy. They begin to realize that there may be more than one way to express their thoughts and ideas. Suddenly, preschoolers not only respond to their name but begin to recognize that they can write their name – those scribbles begin to take on even greater meaning. Similarly, they notice and take interest in all the print around them in their environment – signs,

labels, letters, advertisements, and others. They also take great joy in drawing, painting, or simply creating things because it is yet another way to express their creative ideas. Preschoolers are learning to use and differentiate between various writing instruments with these types of activities, for example, the difference between pencils (write in black) and crayons (write in many different colors). Very often these "works of art" are also accompanied by imaginative stories that may be told or scribbled on paper. If children have had experiences with being read to and/or watching others read, they too want to follow in these footsteps. They learn to "handle" books in ways that demonstrate their understanding that there is a beginning, middle, and end to stories, that there are ways to turn pages (front to back), or ways that different characters "act" in a story or solve a challenge. More importantly, they want to "read" on their own. Preschoolers can often be seen turning the pages of a book and telling themselves or others the story that they have heard so many times before from the adults who care for them. Suddenly, they have a greater range of expressing themselves, and *el gusto* of language and literacy learning truly surfaces in a variety of ways as their experiences continue to grow!

How does *el gusto* of language and literacy learning make a difference for Hispanic children?

El gusto of language and literacy learning for children from birth to five years old is not limited to sounds, actions, or words. Integrated into each experience and even each word or action, particularly for Hispanic children, are families' culture, values, traditions, and, at times, exposure to more than one language (*idioma*).[§] What this means is that, beginning at birth, children learn about language and literacy within the context of their own culture and language. For example, infants in Latino households transferring from bottle or breastfeeding to eating solid foods will eventually be exposed to many foods representative of the lifestyle and culture within their homes. Children begin to learn words, tastes, and smells of traditional foods such as *caldos* (soups), *arepas* (corn cakes), *pernil* (pork), *plátano* (sweet banana), or papaya. The songs or music that children hear may have a variety of points of origin such as the lullaby "*Arroyo, arroyo mi bebé* (Sleep, Sleep My Baby)" or the playful song "Los pollitos (The Chicks)" or music such as *el merenge, la cumbia,* or *la salsa* accompanied by the distinct musical sounds and instruments representative of specific musical styles. Families may come together to celebrate *Las navidades* (Christmas), *El día de los tres magos* (Three Kings Day), or *El día de los muertos* (Day of the Dead) which may be celebrated in a variety of ways representing typical traditions.

§ In English the word "language" is used to identify two concepts – language development and foreign language learning – while in Spanish these concepts are two distinct words: "*el lenguaje*," which is related to language development, and "*el idioma*," learning a home language and/or foreign language

These are only a few of the many thousands of experiences that Latino children from birth to five years old may encounter in their households. As previously described, such experiences provide meaningful language – words, actions, and expressions – which are regularly reinforced by the adults in their lives through interactions and conversations. Hispanic children are forming the framework for their language development and literacy interests based on what they are exposed to within their households, school programs, churches, and communities. Children's enthusiasm and joy of learning is intricately tied to the typical everyday experiences that surround them regularly and repeatedly. In each and every one of these situations children are building foundations for learning – they are learning not only to understand concepts related to such activities but also specific words, expressions, and beliefs in ways that naturally become part of their thinking and way of viewing and describing their world.

What impact does learning different languages have on Latino children?

Latino children, especially those under age five, are a significant and growing population within this nation. As is typical with many ethnic groups, there is great diversity in the ways that children learn language. Hispanic children from birth to age five may be exposed to one or two languages (*idiomas*)** – both English and Spanish may be used, or it may be only Spanish or only English; however, in each of these scenarios, *el gusto* of language and literacy development is combined with the acquisition of sounds, words, expressions, media use, and exposure to cultural traditions within Latino communities through the home language(s).

If Spanish is the home language, children will learn to express themselves with the tones, sounds, words, expressions, grammatical structure, and cultural traditions typical of Spanish-speaking households. As they are learning the sounds and letters of the alphabet, Spanish-language children easily learn to make the rolling "*rr*" sound as in *perro* (dog) and distinguish it from the "*r*" sound in *pero* (but) or to quickly say the "*ñ*" as in the word *niño* (child). They understand different grammatical structures such as when a descriptor (adjective) is used after the object (noun), for example, *pelota roja* (ball red) or the use of subjects (pronouns) depending on whom the individual may be and the degree of respect that must be offered to an individual, for instance, in the case of *tu* (you) and *usted* (you). Children may also be exposed to various media in Spanish – for example, television programming, radio, books, magazines, newspapers, videos, and mail. While playing at the park children may interact with one another in Spanish, and while in their

** Latino children may have exposure to more than two languages. However, for the purposes of this text, the discussion will focus on monolingual (single-language) or bilingual (two-language) households.

communities may start recognizing signs, advertisements, or billboards in Spanish, although English media may be more predominate than Spanish. In the local bakery children may request baked goods such as *pan de dulce* (sweet bread) or *pan con arequipe* (bread with milk fudge), and family celebrations, traditions, or religious gatherings may be in Spanish.

They may also begin to transfer their experience in language learning to literacy development. Spanish-speaking children use their scribbles to describe words or stories in Spanish or create drawings or write their first words in their home language. In some instances, two- to five-year-olds' first preschool experiences will also reflect the use of Spanish. Children may hear stories about relatives living in other parts of the world and may even travel back and forth between the United States and other Latin American countries. Once again, the context, experiences, and language and literacy experiences are directly intertwined with *el gusto* of language and literacy learning. There will be a time, however, in young Latino children's experiences when a language conflict occurs. It will become increasingly obvious to them as they get older and their experiences outside of their homes and communities expand that Spanish is not always representative of the world around them. Spanish-speaking children will discover that another language, English, is increasingly dominant and that there are resources and experiences that may lie ahead of them beyond those in Spanish.

Within a Latino, English-only household, there may be many cultural and traditional similarities with a Spanish-only household, but they are being represented in a different language. These are the elements of biculturalism. The sounds of English are different from Spanish, so children may be learning the "th" sound as in "this" (*esto*) or the "sh" sound as in "shape" (*forma*) along with many other sounds. The grammatical structures also demonstrate the differences between English and Spanish, for example, the relationship between descriptors and objects in English is exactly the opposite as it is in Spanish, as in "red ball" (*roja pelota*), and the use of pronouns remains the same as in "you" (*usted*), regardless of the individual. The exposure to media can also be English-based which is generally much more prevalent than in Spanish. Children have a lot to choose from regarding television programs, videos, movies, books, magazines, and newspapers, although these may not always reflect certain cultural, or even ethnic, images typical of Latino households or traditions. Here too, children experience *el gusto* of language and literacy learning by enthusiastically sharing and expressing their newfound knowledge and experiences. Latino children also begin to recognize their first written words in English as well as create drawings or stories in their home language. In some English-only situations, Hispanic children may face a similar dilemma to those from Spanish-only households; there may be a sudden contrast in certain practices, beliefs, or traditions in environments beyond their homes. For instance, when they start preschool the dominant language may be English, but some of the traditions, cultural experiences, or even peers may not be similar to those they are familiar with. It becomes a contrast between biculturalism and language use.

Why does the "value" of a language affect "*el gusto*" of language and literacy learning in Hispanic children?

How is language and literacy development different in bilingual homes? Are young children able to effectively *learn* to use more than one language? Yes, yes, and yes! There is no better time to expose children to learning more than one language. The difficulty is not so much for children to learn more than one language but rather to learn to *maintain* both languages. Within bilingual homes, the above experiences occur simultaneously; surprisingly, most children from birth to age five are able to capture and contextualize the learning of two languages quite effectively. Bilingual children (English and Spanish) learn to recognize and use the different sound systems of each language. These children can produce both an "*rr*" as well as a "th" without difficulty or an accent. They learn both grammatical systems and the different nuances related to each language and use the correct grammatical combinations when describing objects or using pronouns. It is also not uncommon for bilingual children at times to "code switch" or combine two languages within their conversations, for instance, "*Abuelita viene mañana* to the house (Grandma is coming tomorrow *a la casa*)." This is typical in situations where young children are learning more than one language. This is rather different from what many adults refer to as "Spanglish," which is actually the combination and creation of new words or phrases that combine English and Spanish simultaneously, such as "yarda" for "yard or backyard," "roofo" for "roof," or "klinex" for "Kleenex" or "tissue." Neither of these patterns indicates that children are confused; rather it is the way bilingual children communicate more effectively. As said earlier, toddlers and preschoolers often understand much more than they can actually put into words. Bilingual children use the tools from both languages to compensate for this developmental process – if they do not have the words in one language, other words can fill in when needed.

Furthermore, regardless of the process of learning a language, the *gusto* or joy that children experience as they are learning to communicate and establish the foundations for reading and writing is exactly the same. In addition, the invaluable role that parents and caregivers play in motivating and enhancing *el gusto* is no less important or different.

There are some differences for bilingual or Spanish-only children as their world starts to extend beyond their immediate home environments. In any bilingual situation, one language will most likely become more dominant than the other; this is a natural occurrence. In the case of Spanish and English, the latter may generally evolve to be the more dominant language because of perceived value from children's point of view – and often that of adults. Similarly, as Spanish-only children enter formal schooling or preschool, they begin to recognize that there is a more dominant language: English. In both cases, children become aware that a greater number of their peers are speaking in English; books and other forms of media are more prevalent in English; and, in many cases, they are being taught to read and write in English, or the adults with whom they

are interacting are speaking only English. It is at this point in children's development that they may not see a need to continue communicating in Spanish, the less dominant language. Why would it be necessary if everything happens in English?

This is often where the consequences of language loss are more dramatic than just losing the sounds, words, or expressions in Spanish. As detailed earlier, children learn *el gusto* of language and literacy learning within a cultural context. They learn not just the words or expressions of the language, but how to express themselves, read, or write about who they are, what they believe in, while referring to the predominant experiences they have integrated into their home language. Suddenly, children find themselves grasping at ways to more effectively communicate their ideas because they may not have the exact words to do so. This confusion oftentimes reduces *el gusto* to an exercise of communication for many children. In addition, Hispanic children also begin to experience a bridge between expectations at home and those of the outside world. As they learn to communicate more effectively in English and use less Spanish, there is an unexpected gap in communication, particularly in Spanish-only homes – children may not be able to effectively communicate with their parents or important adults in their lives. The excitement of sharing their new learning or experiences within their households starts to happen less and less; it is no longer joyful but rather an unnecessary struggle.

How can adults, particularly parents and caregivers, enrich Hispanic children's joy for language and literacy learning while maintaining bilingualism and biculturalism as strengths rather than deficits?

What can be done to counteract this immense struggle? Although the solution may sound simple, it requires a fundamental change in philosophy and approach in supporting Latino children as bicultural and, oftentimes, bilingual. The key facilitators to this approach are children's first teachers – their parents – along with other important and caring adults or caregivers.

Very often adults are unaware of the incredible contributions they make to helping children develop *el gusto* for language and literacy learning, regardless of their own literacy, socioeconomic, and/or educational levels. A first step in helping children is to help parents and caregivers understand that many of the things that they do on a daily basis are so important in leading their children down the path of learning for a lifetime. Helping parents to understand that children are born with an enthusiasm and desire to communicate is important. Below are some suggestions to motivate parents to value communicating with their children.

- Guide parents to recognize that every word or statement they speak helps their children to develop the sounds, words, and expressions they will increasingly use to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and needs. It is truly necessary to support

parents as their children's first and most important teachers and also to help them recognize the invaluable role they play. Once parents have greater recognition of that role, the more likely they are to continue, and even increase, communicating with their children.

- Provide simple yet meaningful ways to explain how children develop language, particularly using the perspective of *el gusto* of learning that children innately possess. Many of the examples described in the earlier parts of this text illustrate ways to relate everyday interactions between parents and young children and how they model language development. Particular attention should be placed on the reactions that many adults may have to the ways children learn – for example, children's need for repetition and how this may conflict with parents' patience.

- Provide precise examples of how parents can "converse" with their children at any age or time. Encouraging parents to talk to their children about the details of their daily routines will help them become familiar with opportunities to communicate with their children. Parents can talk about or write down their daily activities and begin linking examples of what can be done and said to motivate language development. For instance, as they are changing their children's diapers, they might talk about what they are doing; or while going to the park, parents can ask children about what they want to do and why; or while making or serving dinner, they might engage their children in naming the ingredients, their colors, and tastes.

- Support ways that parents can create simple stories, particularly oral stories, with their children. Encourage storytelling by first asking parents to talk about their own children's accomplishments, what they like and enjoy doing. Use prompts along the way which model questioning, for example, "Why did your child enjoy doing that?" or "Where did your child go after that?" or "How did your child do that?" Gradually encourage parents to begin asking each other questions as they are talking about their children. Very few parents have little to say; rather they are eager to share the triumphs and eagerness of their own children. Follow up with samples of the questions that were used. Now ask parents to pick a topic they enjoy sharing with their children and encourage them to think of questions they might ask to begin a story with their children. For example, if the topic is the family dog, have parents engage their children by asking "What does our dog do that is special?" or "Why does he do that?" or "What do you think he will do next?" Keep linking the many styles of questions parents used while describing their children's accomplishments.

- Offer parents ways to encourage literacy development, once again emphasizing that the foundations for literacy development begin in the first five years of life. Guide parents to provide books, magazines, or even photographs at physical levels where children can reach them and talk about them. Help parents to realize they do not have to "read" a book page by page, but rather allow children to direct the way. If children wish to go back and talk about the first page, that is fine, even if parents are

on the second to last page. Encourage parents to ask children about the pictures in the book. Provide specific questions that can be used in most situations, for example, "Why did [character name] do that?" and "What do you think will happen next?" or "Tell me what you like about this picture?" and "What was your favorite part of the story?" Most importantly, encourage parents to begin when their children are infants to read books and talk about pictures with them.

- Encourage parents to offer children writing instruments – paper, pencils, crayons – in locations where they can easily be reached. Explain that children may at times "scribble" two or three lines or make more elaborate drawings, but each scribble has a meaning. Once again, motivate parents to ask their children to about their drawing or scribbles by saying "Tell me about what you did." Provide ways that children's home creations can be displayed in classroom environments and vice versa.

A second step is establishing a philosophy upon which any household or child care program supports being bicultural and/or bilingual as an asset and as a way to foster children's language and literacy learning, along with an appreciation of who they are and the value of their experiences. Assisting parents and caregivers to form partnerships in which they equally share information and support Hispanic children's cultural and language experiences is critical. This is done by creating partnerships between parents and caregivers which use a variety of ways and levels to exchange information. It is at this point in the partnership that both parents and caregivers work together and understand that all children between the ages of birth and five possess *el gusto* for learning along with experiences that are founded within a cultural context. In addition, Latino children have developed a set (or sets) of knowledge based on one or more languages (English, Spanish, or both). The two cannot and should not be separated.

- Provide parents and caregivers with information not only on language and literacy development, but also on how children learn to communicate in a specific language. Once again, there is a lot of detail within this text to provide simple yet concrete examples of how language learning occurs in the context of cultural experiences that can be shared and explained.

- Encourage parents and caregivers to share words and expressions frequently used in the home or within the child care program as a way to exchange information about the language that is used and activities that happen throughout the day in the home and at school.

- Establish "sharing meetings" whereby parents and caregivers can exchange ideas and resources to support traditions as well as language use. Document these ideas and begin to develop ways to do them either within classroom settings or at home. It is remarkable how many ideas parents can offer if they are invited to do so and how receptive caregivers are to implementing these ideas in ways that advance children's learning and experiences. Sometimes these ideas can be as simple as bringing in CDs

of different types of music for project-based experiences whereby children and adults begin to explore different Latin American countries through art or music. These exchanges allow parents, caregivers, and, most importantly, children to recognize that both Spanish and English have significant value within the home and school environments.

- Guide parents and caregivers to understand how working together supports the value of both English and Spanish. Encourage labeling of common objects in both languages whenever possible. In fact, a family literacy project may include creating labels along with pictures of the objects from magazines, newspapers, or even drawings, which can be placed in both the home and at school. Encourage parents and children not only to identify these objects but also to continue to add to items they want labeled.
- Connect with local libraries to extend the type and number of books that children "read" along with parents and caregivers in both English and Spanish. Libraries offer many programs for parents and caregivers to extend literacy opportunities and bring in outside experts to provide information about language and literacy learning. Create a classroom calendar that identifies these resources in English and Spanish, which can be shared on a monthly basis.
- Provide information on how parents and caregivers can use media as ways to expose children to educational resources, such as through public broadcasting television programs or Spanish-language educational programming. Another resource that is frequently not used is the SAP (Secondary Audio Programming) system, which is available for many television programs. English-only programming is dubbed into Spanish. Simply learning how to use a television remote to access this service is invaluable to children and adults.

Finally, no idea or exchange of information is too small or insignificant. Once parents and caregivers have developed the commitment to support *el gusto* of language and literacy learning in a way that supports biculturalism and bilingualism, the momentum is often unstoppable. Not only do adults benefit from this approach, but the difference it makes in Latino children during the early years and their positive perspectives about their own language(s) and culture is monumental. It also motivates Latino parents to become a resource for their children while developing a bond and exchange with caregivers. Both parents and caregivers become strong advocates for the well-being of Latino children. This strategy also fosters an innate joy and enthusiasm for learning which will last a lifetime!

What are some additional bilingual resources to support this approach?

A collection of parent and caregiver information using familiar *Sesame Street* characters is available in English and Spanish at www.sesameworkshop.org/educationalresources. Resources include videos and print materials that can guide parents and caregivers on ways to foster language and literacy development in children from birth to age five by taking advantage of everyday routines. In addition, there is information about ways to use music as an educational resource, and ways to enhance preschool children's experiences in math, science, and understanding diversity. Other materials deal with asthma and lead poisoning prevention.

Additional materials are online at www.sesameworkshop.org/youcanask and include bilingual resources for parents and caregivers to help children ages three- to eight-years-old cope with stressful situations including making new friends, changing preschool programs, moving, the loss of a loved one, or peer pressure.

The Effects of Educational Policies and Practices on Home Languages and Learning

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Vignette

We begin this reflection on how current educational policies are affecting children and their families with a visit to a preschool classroom somewhere in the Southwest. Although there are 15 three-year-old children from Spanish-speaking families in this classroom, English is the only language used by the teacher and the teacher's assistant. This is part of a federally-funded early childhood education program, whose objectives are to teach the children English as a second language and to give them early literacy experiences in English. Its local sponsor, a community service agency, believes that such a program will enable children from low-income families to overcome the barriers to learning they often encounter in school. In the case of the Spanish-speaking children the program serves, language and literacy development is thought to be impeded by their inability to speak English and by their lack of literacy experiences at home. A major strategy in the program then is to involve parents in teaching English at home and in reading to their children in English.

Parental involvement in the program is mandatory, and a parent must spend time in the classroom once each month observing the children or helping the teacher. "Mrs. Martínez"* is in the classroom on one of her visits. She has two children in the program, and today she is visiting three-year-old "Anabela's" class. Next week she will visit "Javier" in the classroom for four-year-olds.

Mrs. Martínez watches as Anabela pats playdough into tortillas at one of the learning centers. During circle time, she listens appreciatively as Anabela sings the alphabet song with her classmates in English: "eybee seedee eeyef gee, eytch aye jay kay eleminopee!" Mrs. Martínez is proud of Anabela; she's just three years old and she already knows English. She and Javier will not have as many problems in school as her older children have had.

When "Josefina" and "Luis" started school, they spoke only Spanish. It took them a while to learn English, but now it's the only language they speak, even at home. Mr. Martínez understands a little English, but Mrs. Martínez does not understand any.

Both parents want their children to do well in school. They worry that the older children are having trouble in school. Both children have been held back and are unenthusiastic students. Luis has been placed in special education classes because he does not read well. He is also getting into trouble at school and spends a lot of time in the principal's office.

* The children and parents discussed in this paper have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities, and those of the agencies and school districts involved.

During this visit to the class, the teacher reminds Mrs. Martínez that she should be reading to her children at home. The teacher's aide translates for the teacher who does not speak Spanish. "Teacher says if you read books to your children in English, they will do better in school," Mrs. Martínez is told.

Mrs. Martínez sighs. She has bought some children's books at the grocery store. They are in English. Before she can read them to her children, however, she will have to learn English herself. She will try; she knows that she must. She is having trouble communicating with Josefina and Luis because they don't listen to her anymore. They say they don't understand what she is saying.

We will, in the end, return to the Martínez family and consider their plight.

Language Diversity in the United States

The United States is one of the most diverse nations on the planet, and yet it is more linguistically (and in many ways culturally) homogeneous than most societies. It is possible to travel from border to border, from ocean to ocean, without running into a situation where one would need to speak a language other than English. This is not to say that other languages are not spoken by Americans.

As a nation composed of immigrants and the descendents of immigrants from many countries, the United States has a great diversity of people with languages other than English in their backgrounds. With few exceptions, most of those who initially spoke a language other than English have learned to understand English and become English speakers. In many if not most cases, they have lost their primary language in the process.

In the past, the process of language loss took place over three generations (Fishman, 1966). The first generation of immigrants who came to the U.S. speaking German, French, Italian, Spanish, Slavic, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Russian, or other languages learned enough English to get by. The second generation, the children of those immigrants, spoke their ethnic language at home and learned English at school, becoming bilingual in the process. The third generation was the one in which the ethnic language was lost; because it was not used for the socialization of children in second-generation homes, the children learned only English at home. This process was remarkably similar across groups (while such languages may continue to be spoken in immigrant enclaves, only rarely are they spoken by third-generation members). It would seem that the American experience does not support the retention of languages other than English, at least for long.

This pattern, however familiar, is changing. It has accelerated over the past decade and a half to a point where not only the second-generation members are losing the immigrant language (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), so too are members of the immigrant generation (Fillmore, 1991a, 1991b, 2000; Hinton, 1999; Kouritzin, 1999). The younger members of the first, or immigrant, generation are losing their first language often as soon as they

enter school. What has led to the acceleration of loss, and should policy-makers, children's advocates, and educators be worried about it? How does the loss of a primary language affect children, their families, and the larger society? These are the questions I will address in this paper. In the end, I will suggest some steps that can be taken to ameliorate the problem.

Nativism and Anti-Immigrant Acts

Over the past two decades, there has been a rising tide of animosity toward immigrants, despite their contributions to U.S. society. Between 1981 and 1998, 15 million new immigrants and refugees were admitted to the United States officially, and according to the Immigration and Naturalization Service another seven million entered the country unofficially.

The presence of so many newcomers has evoked the strongest anti-immigrant sentiment felt in this nation of immigrant origins since the heyday of the Nativist movement (a policy of favoring native inhabitants as opposed to immigrants) in the 1800s (Higham, 1988; Bennett 1988; Cose, 1992) when immigrants – especially from Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America – were persecuted, slaughtered, and banned. While direct acts of hostility and bigotry are no longer tolerated in U.S. society, these sentiments are nonetheless expressed in innumerable ways.

The most notable has been voter initiatives, such as those in California over the past 20 years. California has the largest immigrant population in the country – immigrants constitute 26% of its total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) – and most children from immigrant families need help with learning English in school. Since the mid-1970s, when the California legislature passed the Chacon-Moscone Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act of 1976† many children who did not understand English well enough to benefit from instruction given solely in English have been able to attend school and take classes in both their primary language and English. These education programs quickly became the target of U.S. English, an organization for the new Nativist movement (Crawford, 1992, Nunberg, 1997).

In 1986 U.S. English placed a voter initiative on the California ballot, Proposition 63, banning the use of any language, other than English, in public life and giving any citizen the right to sue government officials for not enforcing the English-only rule. A stunning 74% of the voters in this diverse state voted to pass the initiative to amend the California constitution, excluding from public discourse the 31.5% of the state's residents who spoke

† The Chacon-Moscone Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act of 1976 (Educ. Code, § 52160, §52176).

languages other than English at home.[‡] Since 1986, 27 states in total, including California, have passed English-only laws (Crawford, 1992). In California, Proposition 63 did not in fact greatly change the way people do business, but it did give confidence to the anti-immigrant elements in the state. Having voiced their opposition to linguistic diversity in the state, the voters turned their hostility toward the immigrants themselves.

A series of anti-immigrant voter initiatives have been proposed and passed since then: Proposition 187 in 1994, by a 59% vote, abolishing health, welfare, social, and educational services for undocumented immigrants (which was later found to be unconstitutional); Proposition 209 in 1996, by a 54% vote, abolishing affirmative action programs for women and minorities; and finally Proposition 227 in 1998, by a 61% vote, to end bilingual education in California, which appears to be a major factor in the accelerated loss of children's primary languages these days. Since 1998, two other states have passed initiatives that are either identical or more severe than California's Prop. 227. In 2000, Arizona passed Proposition 203 by a 63% vote, which prohibits native-language instruction for most limited-English-proficient children in public schools; and in 2003, Massachusetts passed Question 2 by a 70% vote, which strictly prohibits the use of bilingual education in its public schools.

Educational Policies, School Practices, and Language Loss

What happens to children when they are required to put aside what they have learned at home in order to participate in school? As an example, "Simon" entered school in the fall of 1998 as a five-year-old, just a few months after California's Proposition 227 became law. While some school districts tried to find ways to delay implementing the law, others such as the one Simon and his brothers attended were eager to comply. The initiative was passed in June; by September Simon's school had eliminated all bilingual programs from its offerings. Simon's parents, let's call them "Mr. and Mrs. Flores," were told that Simon would be participating in an all-English kindergarten class, although he did not speak any English. The Flores family had been living in California since emigrating from Mexico 12 years earlier, and neither of Simon's parents had learned enough English to be fluent,[§] nor were they comfortable speaking it. When Mrs. Flores asked why Simon could not be in a bilingual kindergarten class as his brothers had been, she was told that Simon needed to learn English – not more Spanish. She was further told, without explanation, that there were no more bilingual programs in the school, and that if the family wanted Simon to succeed in school they should help him with English at home.

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‡ U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 data on languages spoken in the home of persons 5 years of age and older.

§ Because they did not know English when they first arrived in the United States, neither Mr. nor Mrs. Flores could find jobs other than those which were low-paying and which required them to work long hours, leaving them little time to take English classes.

Out of necessity, Simon learned English quickly – he had to if he were to participate in the activities each day at school. He was an enthusiastic student, but he often did not understand what he was supposed to be learning. This was especially true a year later when he was supposed to be reading and writing in the language he was just beginning to learn. His teacher noted on his report card that the only letter he recognized was "o" and was recommending him for vision and hearing testing. His parents could not help much at home since neither was able to speak English well enough to help him with his schoolwork. They continued to speak to him in Spanish, the only language in which they were completely fluent and could fully express themselves. His brothers tried to help, but they were having difficulties in school as well once their bilingual education programs ended and they found themselves in English-only classes.

Thus, while Simon was learning English, his literacy and overall educational development was slow and laborious. Simon had started school eagerly and with confidence. Along the way, he began to doubt himself and to suspect that he was not very smart. His second-grade teacher judged him to have poorly-developed language skills; he was behind in every subject and he needed help at home in addition to the help he was receiving at school.

Unfortunately, there was little that the Flores family could do for Simon at home because, in the three years since entering school, he had stopped speaking Spanish and was quickly losing the ability to understand it. He still understood enough to get by at home when family members were communicating with one another. But with his Spanish rapidly eroding, Simon could not participate in the lively discussions that went on at home. In short, he was cut off at school because his English was not developing adequately to handle the instructional activities he was expected to learn from, and he was often cut off at home because he could not understand what his parents and brothers were saying when the conversations went beyond the everyday business of the home and family.

Simon is loved and protected by his parents. They worry about his lack of success in school and do not understand what happened to the bright and spunky little boy they sent off to school just five and a half years earlier. He has become apprehensive and timid about speaking. His English is adequate for everyday communication, and he can joke and tease with any English-speaker he comes across. But he cannot express himself easily on topics that go beyond his everyday experiences at home and at school. He had no confidence in himself as a reader. When asked what his goals are in school, he responded: "I want to read real fast – like the other kids." He wonders what is wrong with himself, just as his parents keep saying, "We don't know what's wrong with him."

The fact is, of course, there is nothing wrong with Simon, nor with his parents. What happened to him is happening to many children, not only in California but also in other parts of the country, with the massive changes in educational policy and practice that have taken place in recent years. Chief among the changes is the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the Bush administration's massive overhaul of the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act legislation. It holds school districts throughout the country responsible for raising achievement test scores for all groups of students, including children who are classified as English learners. That in and of itself is not such a bad idea, since districts do not always provide adequate instructional support for such students.

The problem lies in the harshness of the consequences for schools when test scores do not rise for all groups. If even one group of students fails to make the benchmarks for improvement, the school is in danger of penalties. Schools that fail to demonstrate that test scores for all subgroups are rising to meet state-defined standards of "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) are put on a failing schools list, which can eventually result in students being offered transfers to other schools. The penalties for schools can be extremely harsh: a school must first try prescribed curricular and instructional changes if test scores do not improve, and it must undergo restructuring or end up being contracted out for commercial enterprises to run.**

Needless to say, this has put enormous pressures on schools to emphasize English and English-only in teaching English learners like Simon and his brothers, since they tend not to do well on standardized tests given exclusively in English. No one is exempt – not even those who do not speak English. English learners must be assessed in English right from the beginning to determine whether or not they are making progress in acquiring it as a second language.

There are provisions in NCLB for testing students for up to three years in their native languages, assuming there are tests available in those languages. But in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts English learners are included in statewide assessments of academic performance in English right from the start (which is to say, beginning in the second grade). There are no exemptions, even for newcomers. As expected, these students will not do as well on any test given in English, affecting a school's overall performance rating.

These requirements for assessment are not in themselves a bad idea. It is important to know whether or not schools are doing what they should be doing to help all students achieve. The problem lies in what happens when progress is less than it should be. The picture that is emerging is a dismal one.

** With a slightly more nuanced view of NCLB, NCLR supports the general idea of strong accountability to drive instruction and other practices to close achievement gaps. However, NCLR has also criticized NCLB implementation, arguing that provisions regarding English language learners (ELLs) are underfunded; that the Department of Education and the states have not taken steps to develop authentic accountability and assessment systems that take ELL students into account; and that all parties – the Department of Education, the states, and the districts – have been slow to implement reforms needed to close the achievement gaps.

Test preparation has become the year-round curriculum for English learners as they are drilled from September through May, when the standardized tests are given to all students on the low-level details and facts of English and math. For these children, anything that is not covered in the tests is removed from the curriculum – subjects such as science, social studies, literature, art, and music have disappeared in schools serving language minority students.[††] Apparently, there is no time for anything that is not going to be tested. All that English learners are getting in school these days is English phonics, word-attack skills, English spelling, and English punctuation. Bilingual education, even where it is still possible, has been greatly diminished under pressures from NCLB.

What are children learning from the changes they have experienced at school? They learn that the language of their homes and communities is neither useful nor desirable – it is a barrier to social acceptance and academic learning in school. This is the linguistic environment that English learners now face, and the situation is getting worse. Over the past two years, there has been a renewal of efforts, which were begun in 1988 during the first Bush administration, to use early education to turn children from language minority families into English speakers as early as possible.

The first Bush administration increased funding for Head Start programs to teach English to non-English-speaking three- and four-year-olds, recognizing that it could be done easily and completely at that age. In 1991, a group of children's advocates conducted an informal study examining the effects these programs might have on children's primary languages (Fillmore, 1991a). They found evidence that children throughout the country who participated in English-only preschool programs were putting aside their primary language as soon as they learned enough English to get by, even if their parents spoke little or no English. More than 64% of the families interviewed whose children had been in English-only preschool programs reported that their children were abandoning and losing their primary languages, compared to 47% of the families whose children were in bilingual programs and 26.3% for children in primary-language-only preschool programs. It was clear that children are especially vulnerable to language loss in the early years of life, given the corrosive atmosphere that exists in our society over the retention of languages other than English. In these programs, second-language learning tended to be a highly subtractive process.

Now, nearly a decade and a half later, we are faced with another effort to do away with language diversity, directed through early education programs. Head Start is again the means for turning children into English-only speakers, and this time it is being achieved through testing, just as in K-12. Head Start has been ordered to emphasize English and

†† Linda McNeil and Angela Valenzuela (2001) documented just such practices and effects in their close examination of what happened in Texas when that state made test scores the basis on which schools and school administrators would be evaluated.

English literacy in its work with three- and four-year-olds – putting aside finger painting and other skill-building activities in the preschool curriculum, including children's primary languages. The mandate is to teach children the letters of the alphabet, number facts, and English – or else – and it is enforced by having children pass a standardized test in English (Head Start National Reporting System). In this test, four-year-olds are required to demonstrate their knowledge of words such as "SWAMP" – as in "Point to SWAMP" or "Point to AWARDING." They are asked to identify numbers and letters of the alphabet, and to interpret bar graphs and measurements such as in the following:

- This graph shows how many children on Clark Street have each kind of pet: Dogs, cats, or rabbits. How many children have dogs? How many have cats?
- Point to the number that shows how many inches tall the teddy bear is.

What happens if children do not demonstrate by their test scores that they are learning English – that English and English literacy are not being adequately emphasized in their programs? In fact, nothing happens to them. The consequences are visited only on the programs themselves. Are Head Start programs meeting the Administration's expectations in English literacy and numeracy? If not, they can lose their funding. No carrots. Just sticks. Head Start programs will emphasize the teaching of English whether or not the sponsoring agencies or teachers believe it is the right thing to do.

Already there is evidence that these changes in educational policy and practice are affecting the retention and continuation of languages other than English. In Alaska, where I have worked, efforts to revitalize indigenous languages like Yup'ik and Inupiaq are being reconsidered because the schools are afraid of the penalties for not emphasizing English exclusively (see, for example, "Native Language Programs Run Afoul of No Child Left Behind," Mike Chambers, *Farmington News*, Jan. 26, 2004; and "Rural schools deal with No Child Left Behind differently, but with same results," *Assignment Alaska*, KTUU, February 27, 2004). In Taos Pueblo where the Head Start program had been used to immerse its young children in Tiwa, the mandate to use English is beginning to extinguish the community's language faster than the children can learn it ("Our Language; Our Spirit," Arcie Chapa, UNM Center for Regional Studies, February 2004). In Northern California, teachers worry about what will happen to them if their children fail to make the English benchmarks that have been set up for them.

Should We Worry About Language Loss?

How are children, their families, and the larger society affected by primary language loss? Is it a cause for concern, or is early English learning so important that the loss of primary language is an acceptable risk? No one would deny the necessity of English. One can hardly survive in this society without English.

The question is one of timing[††] and other factors. An early English-only focus is not necessarily better here. It is true that children in the preschool years can learn a language quickly and with little apparent effort. These are the years of rapid language development, and children can acquire a language in a year or two simply by being in a setting where the language is in daily use. However, it is also true that languages can be lost with equal ease during this period, especially when the language they are learning is more highly valued than the language they already speak. Over the years, I have tracked many young children who, as soon as they learn a little English in school, put aside the language they already know and speak, and choose to communicate exclusively in English even at home with family members who do not speak or understand much English (Fillmore, 1991b; 2000).

It takes far less time than one might imagine to lose a language. Family members often do not realize that a shift has taken place in the communicative behavior of a child until the process of loss is well under way. When children bring home the English they have learned in school, parents see it as evidence that they are making progress. They do not realize that if it is not discouraged, the children will eventually come to prefer English over the language of the home.

As the use of English becomes habitual, however, it begins to affect communication patterns in the family. When parents sense that their children are no longer receptive to their communicative efforts, they try to accommodate them by switching to English even when they can barely speak that language, or they modify their speech, simplifying and using words and structures that they might use with younger children, thereby lowering, rather than raising, the linguistic challenge for their children. The result of such adjustments is that children are no longer exposed to concepts, ideas, and values embodied in their parents' native language which invite or motivate further development, and the level of discourse declines and begins to erode.

Once children stop speaking the language of the family, communication begins to break down between parents and children. Children sometimes come to believe that their parents are backwards, uneducated, out of step with the realities of the society. Tensions develop in the home as children find that their parents do not understand them and that they cannot communicate easily with them. What is lost are the occasions where children and parents can easily discuss what is happening in their lives, and where they can support one another as they deal with the everyday exigencies of life.

†† Research shows that the brain is not "overloaded" by learning more than one language; the existence of numerous multiple-language societies supports this. While it is true that instructional time is limited in any educational setting, and that insufficient attention to English can harm the language development of immigrant children, as Fillmore notes an English-only focus at this early stage has equally pernicious effects on their overall development.

When I raise the question of whether people have a right to their own languages, I am almost always reminded that, "No one is saying they can't keep their languages, as long as they don't expect society to do anything to support them. They can do whatever they like in their own communities and homes." And that might seem like a reasonable response – until we take a good hard look at how the odds are being stacked against the retention and continuation of languages other than English.

The truth of the matter is this: all limited-English-proficient children in America will eventually learn English. It is inevitable. How well they do it and how soon they manage it depends on the circumstances under which they are learning English, and on the kind of instructional support they are given in school. To learn English and to retain the use of the primary language, the language in which children can learn what they must learn at home from their parents, is another matter. The massive opposition to bilingual education has demonstrated that even when such programs are mandated, they can be undermined because society will not recognize their effectiveness. At the same time, society should not do anything to counteract efforts made by families to support and maintain language and to continue using it in their homes and communities.

The preschool years belong to the family and community – this is when parents socialize their children in the language, culture, and value system of the family. Imparting that curriculum to children requires time, closeness, and the nuanced communication that is possible only when parents and children speak the same language fully. When society offers preschool education, in which the children are coerced, no matter how gently, into another language and ways of thinking, it comes dangerously close to undercutting the role and responsibilities of parents to educate and influence their own children.

In Support of Families as Educators

Let us return to Mrs. Martínez at her children's preschool center. Here is a parent who wants her children to do well in school and fears they will not succeed if she does not do what she can to help them learn English as early as possible. Her older children have learned English, given up their use of Spanish, and are on their way to losing it, but in spite of that they have not enjoyed much success in school. Bilingual education would have been an ideal solution, except that it is no longer available in the Arizona town where the family lives.

In such situations the family must act to keep its language alive and strong. The adults in the home must take steps to keep English outside of the home – it is a language for school and for interactions with people outside of the home. At home, the language that parents must use with the children is its own—Spanish, or Navajo, or Vietnamese. Parents must insist that their children continue speaking to them in the language of the family. To allow any deviation from this rule would be to risk a shift in communication practices in the home. At the same time, parents must create many opportunities to talk

with their children and teach them what they believe children should know and understand as mature and educated members of the cultural group to which the family belongs. This is not an easy thing to maintain, but this is the responsibility of the family.

And what about the advice Mrs. Martínez was getting from her children's preschool teacher? If reading storybooks to her children is something she would be comfortable doing, it would be useful to do so since it would expose her children to the language of written texts, and there is evidence that children whose parents read to them at home enjoy some advantages in learning to read themselves. However, a parent who does not speak or understand English should not be advised to read to her children in English. If she can read in Spanish, she should be encouraged to do so. But then, is it reading that matters, or is it the rich and nuanced interaction with ideas and stories that build the linguistic capacity of children?

Can parents do it? I will argue that they can and will, if they are supported and encouraged to see themselves as their children's most important teachers and not as obstacles to their success in school and in life. Increasingly, states are adopting universal preschool programs for young children, but if these programs undermine rather than support the role that parents must play in the socialization of their own children, then we should ask if we can afford them. The family is the heart of society. Any program that undercuts the efficacy of the family to rear its children is too costly to society. But the pressures are limited to the preschool or K-12 schools. Few parents feel confident enough to deal with the pressures to assimilate or to turn their children over to be assimilated on their own. They need support from their ethnic communities, churches, and community organizations to continue doing their job in support of their children.

What kind of support would be most helpful? I will argue that parents need education – they need to know how children learn and lose languages; they need to know what they can and must do to promote their children's language development; they need to know what their role must be in helping their children fully develop the language of the home and family; and they need to know how to support their children's mastery of English, even if they can't speak the language themselves. Most of all, parents need a place where they can talk with others like themselves, where they can be encouraged to keep working at what they must do, and where they can encourage others to do the same. Can it be done? *Sí, se puede.*

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Juguemos con el lenguaje: The Joy of Talking with Young Children

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The purpose of this article is to provide parents, providers, and teachers with a practical guide to language and literacy development for Spanish-speaking children, ages four to eight years old.

Research assures us that language development in young children, regardless of what specific language it occurs in, is very important for future success in reading in English.[1] Research also reveals that Latino children in the U.S. do not achieve comparable reading levels of their White peers. For example, on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Hispanic fourth-graders scored 197 out of a possible 500, compared to their White peers who scored 225 on the same test.[1]

Latino parents, child care providers, and teachers of Spanish-speaking children are central to the development of a child's native tongue. Rich language development establishes a solid foundation for the acquisition of literacy skills in the early grades. Parents and other caring adults who understand that children's language develops from engaging in meaningful conversations, dialogues, and language games are able to maximize daily opportunities to enrich and expand children's language and concept development, which will prepare them to be successful in school and life.

Hablando y cantando con nuestros niños
Talking and Singing with Children

Children gain knowledge about their world through social interactions with their parents, brothers and sisters, important adults, as well as other children within their culture. Language is at the center of these social interactions. This is the way children develop cognitively.[2]

For example, if a mother and child are in the kitchen preparing a family favorite, the conversation might sound like this:

Mamá: *"Está fresco el día, vamos a hacer chocolate caliente."*	**Mother:** "Today is a cold day, let's make hot chocolate."
Niño(a): *"¿En qué te ayudo?"*	**Child:** "Can I help you?"
Mamá: *"Trae la olla mediana que está ahí abajo. Vamos a ponerle la leche que está en el refrigerador y le agregamos el chocolate."*	**Mother:** "Bring the medium size pot from under there. Let's pour in some milk from the fridge and then we add the chocolate."
Niño(a): *"¿Quieres el molinillo para batirlo?"*	**Child:** "Do you want the *molinillo* to mix it?"
Mamá: *"¿Sabes la canción del chocolate?"*	**Mother:** "Do you know the song, chocolate?"
Niño(a): *" No, cántamela ahora."*	**Child:** "No, sing it now."

"Uno, dos, tres, CHO uno, dos, tres, CO uno, dos, tres, LA uno, dos, tres, TE CHOCOLATE, CHOCOLATE bate y bate el chocolate."	"One, two, three, CHO one, two, three, CO one, two, three, LA one, two, three, TE CHOCOLATE, CHOCOLATE beat and beat the chocolate."

This mother has taken the opportunity to teach her child a song about chocolate as they sing together and stir this special drink. This simple activity stimulates a child's natural playfulness with language and provides a verse with rhyme, rhythm, and repetition, all helpful ways for a young child to learn and remember new words and phrases. A parent can also introduce the use of the *molinillo de chocolate* (a wooden stick with several wooden rings in one end, especially used in Mexico to stir the chocolate and often present in kitchens of Mexican families).

Parents and other adults in the family can create opportunities to talk with children about family traditions and tell stories about family members, and use these to extend the child's language. For example, a conversation between father and child might go like this:

Papá: *"¿Te conté alguna vez la historia de cuando iba al mercado con mi papá a vender los productos de la granja?"*	**Father:** "Did I ever tell you the story about when I used to go with my father to the *mercado* to sell the produce from our farm?"
Niña(o): *" No, cuéntamela ahora papá."*	**Child:** "No, please tell me about it, Dad."
Papá: *" Nosotros vivíamos en una granja y plantábamos elote y calabaza para vender en el mercado."*	Father: "We lived on a farm and we used to plant corn and squash to sell at the *mercado*."
Niña(o): *"¿El mercado es como el supermarket?"*	**Child:** "Is the *mercado* like the supermarket?"
Papá: *"No, el mercado era al aire libre, sin techo, en la calle no más. Los vendedores se sentaban en el piso y vendían lo que traían."*	**Father:** "No, the *mercado* was outside, with no roof and it was just on the streets. Sellers would sit on the ground and sell what they had."

Through this brief dialogue, the father realizes that the child has never been to a *mercado*. At this point the father can extend the conversation about his experiences growing up and connect them to the child's experiences. For example, the father may remember that the teacher has sent home with the child a book called *Saturday Market*[3] (or he may take the child to a library to look for similar books). In this case, the father does not read the book, but uses it to support the conversation about the family topic. He uses the pictures in the book to talk with his child about the *mercado*, discussing the different products people are selling, such as *chiles, rebozos, huaraches, pájaros,* and *pan* (hot peppers, sandals, birds, and bread).

Compartiendo la poesía con nuestros niños
Sharing Poetry with Children

In discovering the world, children play instinctively with the new words they learn. They are "natural poets" when they make up words or descriptions for things they "discover." The seven-year-old child of a friend at work, when hearing two people speak in a foreign language for the first time, said, "*Están haciendo garabatos con la voz*" ("They are scribbling with their voices"). Children do this in whatever language they are acquiring, and parents should not only be aware of these wonderful moments, but also encourage and celebrate them. Making up and sharing poems with children is a wonderful way to encourage playfulness with language, besides enjoying a lighthearted moment together.

Songs and rhymes that adults learned in their childhood can be used to introduce their young children to the simple elements of poetry. Some examples in Spanish are:

Debajo del Botón	**Under a Button**
"Debajo del botón, tón, tón,	"Under a button, ton, ton, ton,
que encontró Martín, tín, tín	found by Uncle Martin, tin,
había un ratón, tón, tón.	there was mouse Patón, ton, ton, ton,
Ay, qué chiquitín, tín, tín.	playing tin, tin, tin, tin, tin.
Ay, qué chiquitín, tín, tín	Playing tin, tin, tin, tin, tin,
era el ratón, tón, tón,	there was mouse Patón, ton, ton,
que encontró Martín, tín, tín,	found by Uncle Martin, tin,
debajo del botón, tón, tón."	under a button, ton, ton, ton."
Una Rata Vieja	**Pancha, the Old Rat**
"Una rata vieja,	"Pancha, the old rat
que era planchadora,	was ironing one day,
por planchar su falda	and when she pressed her skirt,
!se quemó la cola!	she burned her tail away!
Se puso pomada.	She applied some ointment.
Se amarró un trapito.	She wrapped it in a veil,
Y a la pobre rata le quedó un rabito."	but the poor old Pancha,
	she lost most of her tail."

Most Latino parents know some songs or verses from their childhood that they can share with their children. Among the most common ones in Mexico and Latin America are:

Tengo una muñeca vestida de azul	**I have a Little Doll**
"Tengo una muñeca vestida de azul, *con su camisita y camesú* *la saqué a paseo, se me constipó.* *La tengó en la casa con mucho dolor.*	"I have a little doll all dressed in blue, took her for a stroll and she caught the flu.
Dos y dos son cuatro, *cuatro y dos son seis,* *seis y dos son ocho, y ocho diez y seis."*	Two plus two is four, four plus two is six, six plus two is eight, and eight equals sixteen."
Tortillitas de manteca	***Tortillitas* Made of Butter**
"Tortillitas de manteca, *pa, mamá que está contenta.* *Tortillitas de maíz,* *pa, papá que está felíz."*	"Tortillitas made of butter, for my mom, who is rather happy. Tortillitas made of corn, for my dad who loves me so."

Preschoolers enjoy learning these rhymes and singing them over and over while moving their hands or singing to their dolls. Older seven- and eight-year-olds enjoy teaching them to their younger siblings or friends.

Dichos y adivinanzas
Sayings and Riddles

As we have seen, language and culture are not separate but inexorably intertwined. Latin American cultures, without exception, are rich with folk sayings that express values and beliefs. Adults usually use a variety of these sayings in their everyday speech with each other. Sharing some of these with children while providing a simple explanation of their meaning, without making a "lesson" in behavior out of the occasion, is appropriate. While children may not always fully understand the meaning of these sayings, they enjoy the simple way in which they are expressed and can easily memorize and repeat them. Here are a few examples:

"Cada cabeza es un mundo."	"Each head is a world of its own."
"A fuerza ni los zapatos entran."	" When you use force, not even your shoes fit."
"Al nopal sólo lo van a ver cuando hay tunas."	"You only visit the cactus when it's bearing fruit."

Latin Americans love *adivinanzas* (riddles). We all learned many of them as we were growing up. Rhyme is a key element of these riddles and very appropriate for young preschool children. Here are a few that I remember from my *abuela*, Fermina:

Una Señora Muy Aseñorada	**A Very Lady-like Lady**
"Una señora muy aseñorada *Que nunca sale afuera y* *Siempre esta mojada."* *(la lengua)*	"A very lady-like lady That never goes outside And is always bathing." (the tongue)
"Perez anda Jil camina *Tonto será quien no lo adivina."* *(Perejil)*	"Pars goes by, Ley walks on You can't get it wrong." (parsley)

These fun word games also stimulate cognitive skills while the child tries to figure out the riddle. Always remember not to tire a child by overdoing any of these activities. The main purpose of sharing these with children is enjoyment – not teaching them a lesson. Language is an infinite source of fun and enjoyment for children and adults when shared without ulterior motives. Learning is enhanced by the enjoyment of shared activities.

Children also enjoy listening to poems read aloud because the language in poetry, when it is not sentimental, cute, or condescending, creates a vicarious experience. Following are a few examples of such poems:

Primera Lluvia	**First Rain**
¿Llueve *o* *llora* *el cielo?*	Is it raining or is the sky crying?
Francisco Alarcón[4]	
Primavera	**Spring**
las colinas *comienzan* *a sonreir* *muy verdes* *otra vez*	the hills are starting to crack a green smile once again
Francisco Alarcón[5]	
Meteoro	**Meteor**
Sobre la mesa *un vaso* *se desmaya,* *rueda,* *cae.*	Upon the table a glass faints, rolls, falls.
Al estrellarse	**Crashing**
contra el piso, *una galaxia* *nace.*	to the floor, a galaxy is born.
Elías Nandino[6]	

Las Maravillas de la Ciudad	**Wonders of the City**
Aquí en esta ciudad	Here in the city there are
todo es maravilloso	wonders everywhere
Aquí los mangos	Here mangos
vienen enlatados	come in cans
En El Salvador	In El Salvador
crecían en árboles	They grew on trees
Aquí las gallinas vienen	Here chickens come
en bolsas de plástico	in plastic bags
Allá se dormían	Over there
junto a mí	they slept beside me
Jorge Argueta[7]	

Leyendo libros con nuestros niños
Reading Books with Young Children

The act of reading together with a child is first and foremost an opportunity for closeness and enjoyment. Choosing the appropriate book for a child's age, interest, and ability is very important in making this an enjoyable activity. Looking at illustrations in picture storybooks and talking about stories is a natural extension of parents and children talking, singing, and telling rhymes and riddles together. Notice that I am not saying that every word of text needs to be read in order to "read the book." The important element here is to keep a child engaged and interested in the story, asking questions, pointing out special features of the illustrations, and occasionally pointing to words as they are read. Questions should be geared to pique a child's curiosity in the story such as: *¿De qué crees que se trate este cuento?* (What do you think this story is about?), or *¿Cómo se sentirá el tigre?* (How do you think the tiger is feeling?). Adults should answer the questions the child asks in simple language and at a level the child can understand.

Approached this way, both child and adult are freed from the necessity of reading every word and can explore and make meaning together. A common misconception is that knowing phonics and being able to decode is "reading." While being able to sound words out is certainly useful when reading, the ability to make meaning depends on a lot more. Bringing background knowledge to the reading experience is also essential. For example, a young child who has not had experience with the concept *mesa* (table) and is being taught to decode the sounds in the word may indeed succeed in decoding and even pronouncing the word correctly, while not being able to make any meaning of what has been decoded. In fact, reading cannot be said to happen unless there is understanding. The crucial message the child is receiving in this approach is that a story has meaning and that, as we read the words, we discover that meaning. Even if the book is in English, the parent can use it to "read" in Spanish, using his or her own words. Additionally, the child

is grasping the structure of a story, with beginning, middle, and end. These are the skills that lay the solid foundation that young children need not only to read well – that is, to make meaning of the printed word – but to become avid, even passionate, readers later in life. Reading with expression and inviting the child to join in to finish repetitive phrases are sure ways to make the "reading together" experience an enjoyable one.

For Latino families, choosing books that reflect the family, its heritage, customs, traditions, and foods is important. All children need to see themselves and their loved ones reflected in books and other materials in their environment.

In the book *In My Family/En mi familia,* Carmen Lomas Garza[8] briefly narrates memories of growing up in Kingsville, Texas. Her illustrations are rich in detail and color, bringing the stories to life. The text is in English and Spanish in a double spread next to the illustrations. These stories and pictures evoke family gatherings such as in *Empanadas*, which starts "*Una vez al año mi tía Paz y mi tío Beto hacían docenas y docenas de empanadas, dulces panecillos rellenos de camote o calabaza de su jardín*" ("Once every year my aunt Paz and uncle Beto would make dozens and dozens of empanadas, sweet turnovers filled with sweet potato or squash from their garden"). The illustrations extend the text with details in the way the family members and children are dressed, suggesting that this is a very festive occasion. Latino children from all over the Americas will identify with this special family gathering for making and eating a favorite food. Reading these charmingly narrated stories with children creates special opportunities to have conversations about *nuestra familia* (our family) and the times they get together with relatives and friends. This book has stories about cleaning cactus pads, birthday barbecues, and the healer coming to the home to help mom with a rebellious teenager – all familiar themes within Latino families.

It is important to remember that in order to influence a child's language development and story comprehension, the story-reading experience has to include different kinds of conversations, including engaging children in predicting events, making connections between real life and story events, and asking children to tell which part or character of the story they liked best and why. Understanding the structure of a story is a powerful precursor to reading and comprehension.[9]

Escribiendo con nuestros niños pequeños
Writing with Young Children

Writing and reading are connected in ways that are still being researched. It appears that, similar to acquiring a language and learning to read, the development of writing in children undergoes a series of stages. Young children do not distinguish between drawing and writing, and they will tell you what their drawings "say" if you ask them.

Learning how to write involves much more than knowing the shapes of letters. It involves knowing that print is organized on the page from left to right; that letters form words that

go across the page in a straight line; and that words are separated by space. Children gradually "discover" all these writing conventions and more if provided with opportunities to understand them through their own experiences. From drawing early scribbles, to shapes that resemble letters, to actually learning the shapes and sounds of the letters, children's journey into writing is an exciting one if adults are aware of how to understand the process and assist them with materials and have conversations with them, resisting the urge to provide formal instruction to preschoolers and young kindergartners.[10]

Parents who use writing in their daily lives and "share" their writing with their children are providing an important foundation for their children's literacy development. With exposure to writing, young children begin to learn the conventions of writing and the fact that sentences, words, and letters are visual representations of sounds. They also come to understand that there is a purpose for writing – to send notes or letters to loved ones who are not here right now, or to remind oneself of things to do or items to buy.

The following are some examples of activities parents can do to expose their children to writing and to encourage them to use it at their level of development: ask children to tell you about their picture and write down what they say underneath their drawing; write the child's name and the names of other family members and post them in visible places; talk with children about what you are writing, and why, such as "*Estoy haciendo una lista para ir de compras*" ("I am making a list to go shopping"); and keep a calendar of family chores or responsibilities and share it with the child.

Parents and teachers need to be conscious of the importance of language development in the acquisition of literacy in young children. Activities that encourage rich language development in any language are essential for children to learn to read and write. The adults in children's lives have the responsibility to engage them in language play with nursery rhymes and songs, poetry, and riddles; to converse with children at their level, being mindful of opportunities to expand and extend their language; to read a variety of stories with children and engage them in conversations about the illustrations, characters, and plots of the stories; and finally, to include writing in the lives of young children by engaging them in conversations about their drawings and scribbles and writing down what they say.

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Appendix B: Américas Award Books

Below is a selection of books available in Spanish for preschoolers and children up to eight years of age taken from the Américas Book Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature annotated bibliography. The Américas Award is given in recognition of U.S. works of fiction, poetry, folklore, or selected nonfiction (from picture books to works for young adults) published in the previous year in English or Spanish which authentically and engagingly portray Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinos in the United States. By linking the Americas, the award reaches beyond geographic borders, as well as multicultural-international boundaries, focusing instead upon cultural heritages within the hemisphere. The award is sponsored by the national Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP), and the award winners and commended titles are selected for their 1) distinctive literary quality, 2) cultural contextualization, 3) exceptional integration of text, illustration, and design, and 4) potential for classroom use. These books are valuable resources for families and teachers who work with young Latino children in the development of language and early literacy strategies.

Angel's Kite / *La estrella de Ángel*

By Alberto Blanco. Illustrated by Rodolfo Morales. Emeryville, CA: Children's Book Press, 1994. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-121-9 (picture book).

In this bilingual story, a young boy makes a kite that mysteriously restores a long-missing bell to the town church. Nicely fanciful, with imaginative fabric illustrations, the book draws upon daily life in small towns. A sense of community is evident, and most especially the power of hopes and dreams.

Angels Ride Bikes / *Los ángeles andan en bicicleta*

By Francisco X. Alarcón. Illustrated by Maya Christina González. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 1999. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-160-X.

The third volume in Alarcón's tribute to the seasons celebrates his boyhood memories of autumn, growing up in an extended Chicano family in Los Angeles, California. Short, spirited poems in both Spanish and English deal with such subjects as the first day of school, going to the dentist, and celebrating both the Day of the Dead and Thanksgiving. González's whimsical paintings aptly illustrate the poet's repeated use of angels as a symbol of caring for people in one's life. (Grades 2-5)

Barrio: José's Neighborhood / *Barrio: El barrio de José (dual editions)*

By George Ancona. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1998. 48 pgs. ISBN 0-15-201049-1 (English) ISBN 0-15-201808-5 (Spanish).

The Mission District of San Francisco, affectionately called "*El barrio*" by its residents, is home to young José Luis, an active, curious member of his Latino family and community. Through the artful use of photographic compositions, color, and point of view, and

through clear, fluid prose, Ancona shows the reader José's daily interests and pathways through *El barrio*. At the same time we see his community's history, hopes, and gatherings through the images of people of the Americas who have shaped the lives of today's community. In murals, we see Rigoberta Menchú Tum, César Chávez, children, and refugees embellished with messages of strength and freedom; we see teachers assisting children and artists leading families in song and play. Across the pages, Ancona teaches readers to see the abiding commitment to a place and its people that makes *El barrio*, and every community, home. (Grades 1-5).

Birthday Swap / *¡Qué sorpresa de cumpleaños!*

By Loretta López. New York: Lee & Low, 1997. 32 pages. ISBN 1-880000-47-4 (English) 1-880000-55-5 (Spanish) (K-3).

The author-illustrator Loretta López tells a personal story about a surprise birthday swap with her teenage sister when Loretta was six years old. The surprise allows her to have a memorable celebration in the summer instead of December. The text and the illustrations are well integrated and provide a warm retelling of a birthday that is typical of the multigenerational events characteristic of Latino culture. This is a book of value for all elementary classrooms to provide authentic experiences about diverse cultures in the United States. Spanish and English editions available.

Calling the Doves / *El canto de las palomas*

By Juan Felipe Herrera. Illustrated by Elly Simmons. Emeryville, CA: Children's Book Press, 1995. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-132-4 (picture book).

The author recalls his childhood in the mountains and valleys of California with his farmworker parents who inspired him with poetry and song. Through the poetics of memories and imagery, the story powerfully evokes good things remembered in a migrant childhood. Engaging illustrations echo of magical realism, and a strong sense of family and community suffuses the story.

Carlos and the Skunk / *Carlos y el zorrillo*

By Jan Romero Stevens. Illustrated by Jeanne Arnold. Flagstaff: Rising Moon, 1997. 32 pages. ISBN 0-87358-591-7 (K-3).

In this bilingual book, Carlos tries to show off for his friend Gloria by catching a skunk, getting more than he bargained for. His less-than-wise decision does create an embarrassing and stinky predicament for him, but his ability to remain levelheaded and resourceful helps him solve his problem, at least temporarily. His father provides the more lasting resolution while also allowing Carlos the opportunity to acknowledge his mistake gracefully.

Chave's Memories / *Los recuerdos de Chave*

By María Isabel Delgado. Illustrated by Yvonne Symank. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1996. 32 pages. ISBN 1-55885-084-8 (K-3).

In this bilingual picture book, a woman recalls idyllic childhood visits to her grandparents' ranch in Mexico, where she and her brother played with her cousins, listened to the stories of an old ranch hand, and enjoyed other simple pleasures.

The Christmas Gift / *El regalo de navidad*

By Francisco Jiménez. Illustrated by Claire B. Cotts. Houghton Mifflin, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 0-395-92869-9.

Based on a short story from *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999), this bilingual picture book centers on one particular Christmas memory from the author's childhood in which his parents found a way to help another family even more destitute than theirs. (Grades K-3)

The Crab Man / *El hombre de Los cangrejos (dual editions)*

By Patricia E. Van West. Illustrated by Cedric Lucas. New York: Turtle Books, 1998. 32 pages. ISBN 1-890515-08-6 (English) 1-890515-09-4 (Spanish).

Neville sells crabs to the crab man in order to buy his mother a new dress. His father, who works in the cane plantation, brings home very little money and the dollar that Neville earns is essential for his project. When Neville sees his crabs mistreated by the crab man at a Jamaican hotel, he has to decide whether to forfeit his income or buy his mother the much-needed dress. (Pre-K and older).

Cuckoo / *Cucu*

By Lois Ehlert. Translated by Gloria de Aragón Andújar. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997. 36 pages. ISBN 0-15-200274-X (K-3).

Ehlert's bilingual version of this traditional Mayan tale about the courage of the cuckoo is exquisitely illustrated with designs inspired by traditional Mexican crafts. From trees of life to paper-cuts, the illustrations create a culturally authentic visual setting that masterfully synthesizes many elements of Mexican folk art. Equally poetic in Spanish and English, this story is ideal for introducing very young children to Mexican craft motifs within the context of a very well-told folktale.

Dear Abuelita / *Querida abuelita*

By Sofía Meza Keane. Illustrated by Enrique O. Sánchez. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby, 1997. 24 pages. ISBN 0-7635-3156-1 (English) 0-7635-3155-3 (Spanish) (K-3).

Marco's family moves from Yucatán, Mexico to San José, California a few days before his eighth birthday. Marco writes to his *Abuelita* telling her about his new house, school, and the city's big buildings. He also tells her he misses the happiness and noise of the farm, his horse, and his dog, Pinto. But what he misses most are the stories his grandma would tell him before he went to bed. The illustrations extend the text with details of life in both worlds, which are "as different as night and day." Spanish and English editions available.

De Colores and Other Latin America Folk Songs for Children

Selected, arranged, and translated by Jose-Luis Orozco. Illustrated by Elisa Kleven. New York: Dutton, 1994. 56 pages. ISBN 0-525-45260-5 (picture music book).

A fine collection of songs with Spanish lyrics, English translation, and background on each song's origin and description of related games (so children can actually do the appropriate gestures or games). Rich in color and life, the illustrations are marvelous and culturally full of artifacts, diverse faces, and beautiful borders.

Diez deditos / Ten Little Fingers and Other Play Rhymes and Action Songs from Latin America

Selected by José-Luis Orozco. Illustrated by Elisa Kleven. New York: Dutton, 1997. 56 pages. ISBN 0-525-45736-4 (K-3).

This bilingual collection of finger rhymes and action songs from many Spanish-speaking countries includes lyrics in Spanish and English, music scores, and bright and colorful illustrations. The background notes and simple pictographs showing body movements will aid adults in presenting these playful rhymes to young children. Songs and games from Mexico, the Caribbean, several South American countries, and Spain are included. Kleven's illustrations capture the imagination and create a rich visual setting to share with children.

Feliz nochebuena, feliz navidad

By Maricel E. Presilla. Pictures by Ismael Espinosa Ferrer. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994. 32 pages. ISBN 0-8050-2512-X (picture book).

Combining history and her own memories, the author takes readers on a culinary journey to the Caribbean (especially Cuba) at Christmas time. The book combines history with memory and food as it connects people in Miami and the Caribbean. Emphasis is placed upon family and the sharing of traditions. Recipes are incorporated throughout.

Fernando's Gift / *El regalo de Fernando*

By Douglas Keister. Photographs by Douglas Keister. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books for Children, 1995. 32 pages. ISBN 0-87156-414-9 (picture book).

Young Fernando, who lives in the rainforest of Costa Rica with his family, goes with his friend Carmina to look for her favorite climbing tree, only to find it cut down. As a result, he decides to give her a gift for the future. The photographs particularly give a sense of rural family life and of the rainforest environment.

Fiesta Fireworks

By George Ancona. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1998. 24 pages. ISBN 0-688-14817.

In a burst of colorful photographs, George Ancona has brought to life the festival honoring the patron saint of Tultepec, Mexico, San Juan de Dios. The story centers on Caren Rayes Urbán, the daughter and niece of pyrotechnists who is swept up into the activities of preparing for the *fiesta*. Step by step, the author describes, with vivid photographs and text, all that is involved in making the fireworks and participating in the dramatic event. (K and older).

Fiesta U.S.A. (Spanish and English editions)

By George Ancona. New York: Lodestar, 1995. 48 pages. ISBN 0-525-67498-5 (photo essay) (7-10).

These outstanding photographs and text include an interesting cross-section of celebrations, with both widely known and regional celebrations. The reader learns about traditions both brought and adopted, and closes the book with a sense of having participated in the celebration.

From Father to Son / *De padre a hijo*

By Patricia Almada. Photographs by Marianno de López. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby, 1997. 32 pages. ISBN 0-7635-3133-2 (English) 0-7635-3132-4 (Spanish) (Grades K-3).

A family of bakers, *panaderos*, going all the way back to Nayarit, Mexico and now established in Los Angeles, shares their tradition in this wonderfully simple book. Photographs of father and son showing the different steps in the preparation of the dough and a variety of different kinds of breads add valuable information to the text. A map and a page of sweet bread riddles create opportunities for discussion and fun. Spanish and English editions available.

From the Bellybutton of the Moon and Other Summer Poems / *Del ombligo de la luna y otros poemas de verano*

By Francisco X. Alarcón. Illustrated by Maya Christina González. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1998. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-153-7.

As summer comes, you feel the warmth and growth, and it invites you to come out and play. This bilingual collection of poems, told from the perspective of children, is a delight to read on your own or out loud. The author has captured the essence of summer, family, and children at play in his poems. High interest, whimsical, fun-filled illustrations, and playful language help us enjoy summer in Jalisco, Mexico. Classroom teachers are privy to a rich cultural context in which to introduce a Mexican family. This book is pure entertainment! (Grades 1-3).

Gathering the Sun: An Alphabet in Spanish and English

By Alma Flor Ada. Illustrated by Simón Silva. New York: Lothrop, 1997. 40 pages. ISBN 0-688-13903-5 (K-3).

The rich and deep hues of reds, greens, and blacks with splashes of yellows, blues, and browns adorn the pages of this bilingual alphabet book. The life of the migrant family working in the fields is told with great sensitivity as one reads and explores the alphabet. The 28 poems in Spanish and English are carefully superimposed on the artwork. The continuity of culture, family, and friends is articulately woven into the text and illustrations.

A Gift for Abuelita: Celebrating the Day of the Dead / *Un regalo para Abuelita: en celebración del Día de los Muertos*

By Nancy Luenn. Illustrated by Robert Chapman. Flagstaff: Rising Moon, 1998. 32 pages. ISBN 0-87358-688-3.

Rosita wishes that her grandmother, whom she adored, could be remembered in a very special way. She uses the occasion of el *Día de los Muertos* to make a gift that is just right to celebrate *Abuelita*. This is an exceptional book to use in a classroom to discuss the loss of loved ones. The Mexican culture provides many children and adults with a joyful family festivity in which all remember those family members who have passed away. This bilingual version, culturally rich illustrations, and poignant story will appeal to children in a personal way. (Grades 2-5).

Grandma and Me at the Flea / *Los meros meros remateros*

By Juan Felipe Herrera. Illustrated by Anita DeLucio-Brock. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 2002. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-171-5.

Sunday mornings bustle with excitement as Juanito plays hide-and-seek, maneuvering through the flea market that is his playground. Juanito serves as grandma's courier, running from stand to stand, delivering bartered goods that grandma shares with other vendors. Herrera offers a tender, poetic story culled from his early childhood memories of fun-filled flea market days spent with *abuelita*. The vivid colorful illustrations aptly capture the sounds and sights of the flea market from a child's point of view.

Grandmother's Nursery Rhymes / *Las nanas de Abuelita*

By Nelly Palacio Jaramillo. Illustrated by Elivia Savadier. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994. 32 pages. ISBN 0-8050-2555-3 (picture book).

The author, who was born in Colombia, collected these lullabies, tongue twisters, and riddles from South America to share after her grandchild was born. The collection is noteworthy for its efforts to include English versions, which become wholly different but often play just as strongly in translation.

I Am of Two Places / *Soy de dos lugares*

Edited by Mary Carden and Mary Cappellini. Illustrated by Christina González. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby, 1997. 16 pages. ISBN 0-7635-3161-8 (English) 0-7635-3160-X (Spanish) (K-3).

This collection of poetry is composed by five Latino children, ages eight to eleven who describe their pride and frustrations in speaking two languages and loving the people and places of two cultures. Their metaphors and experiences provide compelling images and ideas for engaging children in discussion and writing. González's illustrations combine bold symbols and bright, warm images of children and adults which could inspire children to illustrate their own poetry. Spanish and English editions available.

Icy Watermelon / *Sandía fría*

By Mary Sue Galindo. Illustrated by Pauline Rodríguez Howard. Piñata Books/Arte Público, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 1-55885-306-5.

As three generations of a Mexican American family share a watermelon on the front porch, *Abuelo and Abuela* recount the amusing story of how they first met when a watermelon fell off the back of a truck. (Grades K-2)

Iguanas in the Snow and Other Winter Poems

By Francisco X. Alarcón. Illustrations by Maya Christina González. Children's Book Press, 2001. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-168-5.

In their final collection of seasonal poetry, Alarcón and González celebrate winter in Northern California. With bilingual text and colorful images they frolic over the beach, through the city of San Francisco, a mission, a cable car, the harbor, and the ancient redwood forests of the Sierra. In the typical upbeat fashion readers have come to enjoy in Alarcón's earlier seasonal poetry, the writer honors families, neighborhoods, schools, holidays, and the talent of being bilingual. The warmth that poet Alarcón brings to the wintry slices of everyday life for children is rivaled only by González's exuberant artwork that enfolds his words. "Children are the blooming branches of trees," he proclaims at the book's conclusion, and González plants smiling children, proudly standing tall in front of snow-covered sequoias, young growth juxtaposed with ancient giants. This engaging collection offers children the opportunity to grow in their experience with poetry, both in the appreciation and creation of it.

In My Family / *En mi familia* (Picture book)

By Carmen Lomas Garza. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1996. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-138-3 (K and older).

In this bilingual picture book celebrating Mexican American culture, Lomas Garza shares memories of growing up in her hometown of Kingsville, Texas, near the Mexican border. Her paintings of children and adults playing and working together as they prepare food, celebrate life events, and mend ills enable readers to understand constancy and change among family and friends. The author's narratives are told as first-person reflections that often add dialogue or other layers to the story being conveyed in her paintings. Truly for all ages, this companion to *Family Pictures* will be an important addition to any study of family, community, personal storytelling, or narrative painting.

Isla / *La isla* (English and Spanish editions)

By Arthur Dorros. Illustrated by Elisa Kleven. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1995. 40 pages. ISBN 0-525-45422-5 (Spanish) 0-525-45149-8 (English) (picture book).

In this sequel to *Abuela*, Rosalba and her grandmother take an imaginary journey to the Caribbean island where her mother grew up and where some of her family still lives. They have another adventure, this one full of island-life detail. Overall, this is a warm presentation of family and the magic power of imagination and storytelling.

Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems / *Jitomates risueños y otros poemas de primavera*

By Francisco X. Alarcón. Illustrated by Maya Christina González. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1997. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-139-1 (3-5).

Alarcón's bilingual poetry captures the joy of living closely with the land and with the people who nurture earth's life. With fresh metaphors based on the bounty of a spring planting, we see old and young people committed to the land and to the well-being of farm workers. Gonzalez's illustrations complement and extend the high spirits and deep connections that Alarcón expresses throughout this collection.

The Lizard and the Sun / *La largartija y el sol*

By Alma Flor Ada. Illustrated by Felipe Dávalos. New York: Doubleday Dell, 1997. 40 pages. ISBN 0-385-32121-X (K-3).

This *porquoi* tale, set in ancient Mexico, uses playful repetition in language and plot to engage readers in the story of a tenacious lizard who continues her search for the sun while all other animals gradually stop looking. Lizard finds the sun but must make several journeys into the city to confer with the emperor who eventually assists the lizard in awakening a very sleepy sun. The richly-colored, detailed illustrations depict Aztec people and the central Mexican landscape with respect and warmth. Davalos' rendering of the emperor is especially gentle and wry. Spanish and English narratives appear side by side throughout the book.

La Cucaracha Martina: A Caribbean Folktale / *La Cucaracha Martina: un cuento folklórico del caribe*

Written and illustrated by Daniel Moretón. New York: Turtle, 1997. 32 pages. ISBN 1-890515-03-5 (English) 1-890515-04-3 (Spanish) (K-3).

Moretón's version of this traditional Caribbean folktale about "La Cucaracha Martina, who didn't care much for life in the big city" is freshly retold and cleverly illustrated. The noise of the big city is what Martina likes the least, so on Monday morning she fixed herself up and went out in search of the beautiful noise that "made her feel all funny inside." Vivacious and witty, Martina encountered all kinds of animals that made terrifying noises before she found what she was looking for. Bright illustrations of contemporary-looking animals and onomatopoeic text are integrated in the design of each page. Both language versions maintain the humor while accurately translating animal sounds. Delightful for reading aloud to young audiences. Spanish and English editions available.

Magic Windows / *Ventanas mágicas*

Written and illustrated by Carmen Lomas Garza. Spanish translation by Francisco X. Alarcón. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 1999. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-157-X.

As we learn from an introductory note, the art of Mexican cut paper, or *papel picado*, goes back thousands of years when Aztec artists created bark paper banners. Carmen Lomas Garza first learned the art herself from her grandmother who used cut paper to create embroidery designs, and she continues the tradition today with her own intricately designed cut-paper art. Each *papel picado* presented in this volume is accompanied by a brief explanation, in both Spanish and English, which reveals something about the artist's personal history and how it's linked to her Mexican heritage. (Grades 3-8)

Mediopollito / Half-Chicken

By Alma Flor Ada. Illustrated by Kim Howard. New York: Doubleday, 1995. 40 pages. ISBN 0-385-32044-2 (picture book).

This well-done bilingual folktale explains why the weather vane has a little rooster on one end which spins around to show which way the wind is blowing. In contrast to the Ugly Duckling, here the unique and unlike-others chicken becomes vain from all the attention! Readers will find themselves exploring the unusual and brilliant illustrations.

Messengers of Rain and Other Poems from Latin America *(Simultaneous Spanish edition: Mandaderos de la lluvia)*

Compiled by Claudia M. Lee. Illustrated by Rafael Yockteng. Toronto: Groundwood, 2002. 80 pages. ISBN 0-88899-470-2 (English) 0-88899-471-0 (Spanish).

From Nicaragua's Rubén Darío, to Chile's Nobel winner Gabriela Mistral, to the gifted Salvadoran Claudia Lars, this handsome collection of poems for children brings together the best of Latin America's poets. The translations are impressive, garnered from respected professionals. The colorful illustrations delight, gracing the broad themes that group the various poets. Both English and Spanish editions belong side by side; this collection is highly recommended for every school and public library in the country.

Mexico's Marvelous Corn / *El maravilloso maíz de México*

By Margarita González-Jensen. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby, 1997. 16 pages. ISBN 0-7635-3182-0 (English) 0-7635-3181-2 (Spanish) (K-3).

Maíz, a staple of Mexican meals and snacks, is described in all its variety and flavors in this easy-to-read book. Readers will find a feast of corn, from atole to tortillas, with brief, accurate descriptions of traditional and contemporary forms of preparation. A wonderful companion to *Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems.*

Mi hija, mi hijo, el águila, la paloma: un canto azteca / My Daughter, My Son, the Eagle, the Dove: An Aztec Chant

By Ana Castillo. Illustrated by S. Guevara. Dutton, 2000. 48 pages. ISBN 0-523-45867-0 (Spanish) ISBN 0-525-45856-2 (English).

Ancient and contemporary elements are nicely blended in both text and illustrations in these attractive small books designed to instill cultural values and inspire adolescent readers. (Grades 6-9)

My Mexico */ México mío*

By Tony Johnston. Illustrated by F. John Sierra. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1996. 36 pages. ISBN 0-399-22275-8 (K-3).

A love of Mexico is expressed through the gentle poetry and dignified illustrations of this collection. The author lived in Mexico City for 15 years; the illustrator is second-generation Mexican-American.

My Very Own Room */ Mi propio cuartito*

By Amada Irma Pérez. Illustrated by Maya Christina González. Children's Book Press, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-164-2.

As the eldest child and only daughter in a large Mexican-American family, the spirited narrator of this joyful bilingual story longs for a little space to call her own. With the help of her *mamá* and *papá*, her *Tío* Pancho, and her five younger brothers, she's able to fix up a small bedroom for herself in a storage closet. And as soon as she has everything just as she wants it, she invites her brothers in so she can read them a story. Brightly colored, stylized illustrations enhance the exuberance of the text in a story that communicates both individuality and family solidarity. (Grades K-3)

Prietita and the Ghost Woman */ Prietita y la Llorona*

By Gloria Anzaldúa. Illustrated by Christina González. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1996. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-136-7 (K-3).

Prietita, a young Mexican American girl, goes in search of an herb to cure her mother and encounters *La Llorona*. Rather than the negative image with which the legendary figure has traditionally been associated, here *La Llorona* is a compassionate figure. The two characters work together, symbolizing the strength of Chicana women. (Bilingual)

Radio Man: A Story in English and Spanish

By Arthur Dorros. Spanish translation by Sandra Marulanda Dorros. New York: Harper Collins. 1993. 40 pages. ISBN 0-06-021547-X (picture book).

Diego listens to the local radio stations in each of the small towns where his family finds migrant farm work. His radio provides him with companionship and a sense of place, wherever he is. This very original bilingual story emphasizes family, friendship, and community, with nice touches of humor and a positive perspective. Diego proves to be a very resourceful protagonist.

The Story of Doña Chila / *El cuento de Doña Chila*

By Mary Capellinni. Illustrated by Gershom Griffith. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby, 1997. 24 pages. ISBN 0-7635-3267-3 (English) 0-7635-3266-5 (Spanish) (K-3).

In an unusual picture story set in Honduras, Oscar's mother must decide whether to have him treated by a doctor or by the local *curandera* after he is bitten by a scorpion. The conflict between two cultures is realistically shown in this engaging story. Spanish and English editions available.

The Tortilla Factory / *La tortillería* (Spanish and English editions)

By Gary Paulsen. Paintings by Ruth Wright Paulsen. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995. 32 pages. ISBN 0-15-292876-6 (English) 0-15-200237-5 (Spanish) (picture book).

With simple, appealing text, the story of corn, from seed to plant to *tortilla*, is illustrated. The book, graced by Wright Paulsen's paintings, emphasizes the never-ending quality of the story throughout time.

The Tree is Older Than You Are: A Bilingual Gathering of Poems and Stories from Mexico with Paintings by Mexican Artists

Selected by Naomi Shihab Nye. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. 101 pages. ISBN 0-689-80297-8 (poetry, ages 8-adult).

This bilingual collection is remarkable, both in terms of the poetry and the illustrations. Works of all lengths for all ages are included. Shihab Nye has done a commendable service to Mexican culture and U.S. readers by producing such a book.

Where Fireflies Dance / *Ahí, donde bailan las luciérnagas*

By Lucha Corpi. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1997. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-145-6 (K-3).

A bilingual text recounts the author's childhood memories of growing up in a small town on the Caribbean coast of Mexico. Lucha and her brother Victor especially love to listen to their grandmother tell stories about the ghost of San Sebastián, who is said to haunt a local house.

Appendix C: Statistics: The Latino Community is Diverse and Expanding

The following statistics present a glimpse into the nature and diversity of the Latino population in the United States and accompany the attached maps: *Distribution of U.S. Latino Population Under 5 Years Old, 2000* and *Distribution of Latino Population in the U.S. / Number of Latinos in the U.S. by Country of Origin.*

The Latino community in the United States is undergoing major demographic changes. Latino immigrants come from every corner of Latin America, and as a group they bring an unprecedented cultural diversity to the nation. In 2000, 35.2 million Latinos lived in the United States, composing more than 12% of the total population. From 1990 to 2000, the Latino population increased by more than 13 million people, accounting for nearly 33% of the nation's overall population growth during this time. Some states, such as California, have seen tremendous growth, and it is reported that one of every two infants born each day has a Latino parent. However, the largest percentage increases are occurring in the South and the Midwest.

Latinos reside in every area of the United States. Between 2000 and 2050, Latinos are expected to account for 51% of the population growth so that by mid-century Latinos are projected to reach 98 million in number and represent about 25% of the total U.S. population – an increase of more than two times their current number. The three largest Latino subgroups are Mexican Americans representing 59.3% of the total Hispanic population, Puerto Ricans at 9.7%, and Cubans at 3.5%; other Latinos, including Central and South Americans, as well as Dominicans, constitute the remaining 27.5%. Various subgroups remain concentrated in different parts of the United States. Similar to immigrants from other parts of the world, Latin American immigrants exhibit differences in their economic circumstances, immigration patterns and characteristics, educational backgrounds, bilingualism, family structure, and health and well-being.

While Latino immigrants come to this country for different reasons and with varied needs and desires, they also share some similarities. Immigrant families often experience significant adjustment issues as they transition from their country of origin to the United States. Among the most common and serious issues are economic, cultural, and educational challenges. Many immigrant parents experience some unanticipated challenges as well. While many parents report expecting that their children will continue to speak their home language and want them to feel proud of their heritage, they also want their children to learn English and develop the social and academic skills that will expand their opportunities to participate and thrive in their adopted homeland. Unfortunately, parents often find that the process of Americanization can also result in their children growing up disconnected from their linguistic and cultural roots. The outcome of this loss of cultural identity is thought by many to result in low self-esteem, the formation of unhealthy identities, inadequate exposure to early literacy activities and reading, and low academic achievement. Family disruption is also a very real consequence.

Source: *We the People: Hispanics in the United States*, *Census 2000 Special Report*, December 2004, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Nativity of Hispanics Residing in the United States

- 40% of Hispanics are foreign-born.
- 70% of Hispanics are either native or naturalized citizens, compared to 90% of the total population.
- 98.6% of Puerto Ricans are native, compared to 24% of Central Americans and 23% of South Americans.
- 41% of Cubans are naturalized citizens while 56% of Central Americans are noncitizens.

Decade of Entry of Foreign-born Hispanics into the United States

- The percentage of foreign-born Latinos living in the U.S. has steadily increased during the past 35 years: 10% arrived before 1970; 15% arrived between 1970 and 1979; 29% arrived between 1980 and 1990, while 46% arrived between 1990 and 2000.
- Of the 46% of foreign-born Latinos now living in the U.S. who arrived between 1990 and 2000, 49% are Mexicans and 47% are South Americans.

Language Spoken at Home

- 18% of the U.S. population aged five and older speak a language other than English at home, and 60% of these speak Spanish.
- 75% of Hispanics speak a language other than English at home; 99% of these speak Spanish.
- 90% of Dominicans and Central Americans speak a language other than English at home, representing the highest rate among Latinos.
- 40% of Hispanics speak English less than "very well."

Source: *We the People: Hispanics in the United States, Census 2000 Special Report*, December 2004, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Latino Children in the United States

- More than 11.4 million Latino children under the age of 18, or more than one in six, reside in the United States. By 2020, it is estimated that more than one in five children under the age of 18 will be Latino.
- 60% of Latino children residing in the United States were born in the United States.
- 32% are native-born with native parentage (both parents born in the United States).
- 29% are native-born with foreign or mixed parentage.

- 65% of Latino children live in two-parent families, compared to 78% of White and 37% of Black children.
- 25% of Latino children live in homes headed by their mothers.
- 4% live in households headed by their fathers only.
- 28% live in poverty.

Risk Factors Among All Children

- Having a mother who has less than a high school education
- Living in a family on welfare (TANF) or receiving food stamps
- Living in a single-parent family
- Having parents whose primary language is a language other than English

Risk Factors Among Latino Children

- 33% of Latino first-time kindergartners have two or more risk factors, compared to 27% of their Black peers, 17% of their Asian/Pacific Islanders peers, and 6% of their White peers.
- 71% of children entering kindergarten from Latino families have one or more risk factors, compared to about 29% of those from White families and 61% from Asian/Pacific Islander families.
- 55% of Latino students in kindergarten through 5th grade speak mostly English at home, 28% speak mostly Spanish, and 16% speak English and Spanish.
- Of the 71% of Latino children ages 5-17 who speak another language at home, 23% have difficulty speaking English.
- 92% of Latino students who speak mostly Spanish at home have a mother who was born outside the United States.
- 49% of Latino students who speak mostly Spanish at home have parents with a high school education or higher, compared to 83% of those who speak mostly English at home.

Before- and After-School Care

- More than 50% of all Latino children in kindergarten through 8th grade receive before- and after-school care from a parent only.
- 21% receive care from another relative.
- 16% attend a center-based program.
- 7% receive care from a nonrelative.
- 10% care for themselves (self-care).

Persistence

- 64% of Latino 18- to 24-year-olds complete secondary schooling, compared to 92% of Whites and 84% of Blacks.
- 44% of 16- to 24-year-old Latinos born outside the United States drop out of school, compared to 15% for first-generation Latinos.

Reading Experiences Among Latino Children

- The percent of Latino three- to five-year-olds who are read to rose from 53% in 1991 to 62% in 1993, but there has been no change since.
- 61% of Latino children have been read to three or more times in the past week
- 40% have been told a story by a family member in the past week
- 25% have visited a library in the past week.

Source: *Status and Trends in the Education of Hispanics*, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, April 2003.

- "Five-year-old English-proficient Latino children are about three months behind their White peers in their pre-reading skills. This early gap – already wide at entry to kindergarten – is equivalent to 80% of the gap observed in reading skills among Latino children at fourth grade."
- "Latino kindergarten children score about 17 points below White children on early language and pre-literacy assessments (100-point scale, termed normal curve equivalents); 8-12 points of this gap could be erased if less-advantaged Latino children enter center-based programs early and attend regularly."

Source: Bridges, M., B. Fuller, R. Rumberger, and L. Tran, Preschool for California's Children: Promising Benefits, Unequal Access, PACE and UCLMRI Policy Brief 04-3, September 2004.

Appendix D:
About the Authors

Rebeca María Barrera

Director, Gateway to College, Palo Alto College

Rebeca Barrera is the founder and former president of the National Latino Children's Institute (NLCI). NLCI's mission is to develop community resources and youth leadership; it accomplishes its mission by developing culturally-based community education programs that utilize the best thinking about what works for young Latinos. Under Barrera's leadership NLCI staff study trends, conduct focus groups, and create unique solutions to removing barriers.

She now works at the Palo Alto College in San Antonio, Texas, as the director for the Gateway to College Program.

Barrera's professional work began as a high school teacher in the Edgewood Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas. She has an M.A. and has worked for the Intercultural Development Research Association, was director of the AMANECER Project, was an instructor in the Child Development Department of San Antonio College and the University of Texas at San Antonio, owned and managed child care centers, and was executive director of the Corporate Fund for Children.

Barrera has co-authored several community development programs to implement the Latino Children's Agenda, was Chair of the San Antonio Child Care Task Force, and is the first Latina to serve on the Board of Directors of Scholastic, Inc. a global publisher of children's books and magazines. She also serves on the Board of Directors of the San Antonio Public Library Foundation and Self-Reliance Foundation. Previous national board memberships include the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Community Resources Group.

Jeanette Betancourt, Ed.D.

Assistant Vice President, Education and Research, Sesame Workshop

Dr. Jeanette Betancourt is Assistant Vice President for the Education and Research division of Sesame Workshop. She is responsible for conceptualizing, developing, and researching program models and materials for all educational Sesame Workshop Outreach initiatives and ensuring that content, language, and educational strategies are appropriate for diverse ethnic and cultural groups. She has directed Sesame Workshop Outreach projects in the areas of bilingual education, literacy, music, health and safety, and child care and maintains and expands a comprehensive network of national organizations that are strategic partners within the educational community.

Dr. Betancourt also oversees content development for the production of Sagwa, *the Chinese Siamese Cat*, advises on the production of *Dragon Tales*, and is the series content advisor for the caregiver programs *A Place of Our Own* and *Los niños en su casa*, currently in development by KCET, the PBS station in Los Angeles, California.

Dr. Betancourt received a B.A. from Herbert H. Lehman College, City University of New York, an M.A. in Speech and Language Pathology from Hofstra University, an M.S. in Bilingual Reading/Special Education from St. John's University, and an Ed.D. in Special Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. She is a licensed bilingual speech and language pathologist and educational therapist, with a specialty in treating families and children with psychiatric disorders. She has served on numerous boards and committees that service children and families, and regularly provides workshops on issues concerning children.

Lily Wong Fillmore, Ph.D.

Jerome A. Hutto Professor in Education
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Lily Wong Fillmore has been on the faculty of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley since 1974. She is a linguist (Ph.D. in Linguistics, Stanford University, 1976) and an educator. Much of her research, teaching, and writing have focused on issues related to the education of language minority students.

Her research and professional specializations are in the areas of second-language learning and teaching, the education of language minority students, and the socialization of children for learning across cultures. Over the past 35 years, she has conducted studies of second-language learners in school settings – in particular, Latino, Asian, American Indian, and Eskimo children. Her research and publications have focused on social and cognitive processes in language learning, cultural differences in language learning behavior, sources of variation in learning, and primary-language retention and loss.

She recently conducted research in Yupik villages along the lower Yukon River in Alaska, and over the past decade has directed a UC Berkeley doctoral program for American Indian leaders in several pueblos in New Mexico, where she continues to work.

Graciela Italiano-Thomas, Ed.D.

Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP)

Dr. Italiano-Thomas has extensive experience as an educator, administrator, and community builder. Before joining LAUP, she was CEO of Centro de la Familia de Utah, a nonprofit organization based in Salt Lake City, which works to strengthen the Hispanic family by promoting self-sufficiency. She also served as a senior consultant to the National Head Start Bureau on issues relating to English language learners within the Head Start system. She was an associate professor in the College of Education at Weber State University, an assistant professor at Cal State Poly – Pomona's School of Education, and an instructor at Southern Illinois University, in addition to having been an elementary school teacher and principal in her native Uruguay. While living in New York City in the late 1980s, Dr. Italiano-Thomas founded and directed SoHo Language and Consulting Services, a foreign language school and consulting company that provided services to school districts, institutes of higher learning, library associations, and educational publishing houses.

Dr. Italiano-Thomas holds a doctorate in Education and Institutional Management from Pepperdine University and a master of sciences degree in education from Southern Illinois University. She received undergraduate degrees from Albion College in Michigan and the Instituto A. Vazquez Acevedo in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Antonia Lopez

Director, Early Care and Education,
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Antonia Lopez is the Director of Early Care and Education for the National Council of La Raza and is a senior member of the NCLR Center for Community Educational Excellence (C2E2). She leads the team which is responsible for the development and management of early care and education services and activities. In this role, Lopez designs, administers, and evaluates projects aligned with C2E2's strategic plan to expand educational opportunities for young Latino children and their families. In addition, she provides programmatic and technical support to the Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation (ORAL) and other NCLR components.

Prior to joining NCLR in 2003, Lopez served as the Vice President for the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), a California statewide community-based organization that provides parent education to approximately 32,000 parents a year. She has more than 20 years of senior program management experience in bilingual early childhood education, including Head Start and California state-funded programs. Lopez holds an M.Ed. in school administration with a specialization in bilingual education from the California State University of Sacramento (CSUS) and received its 1995 Distinguished Alumni Award. Lopez has been recognized by local, state, and national organizations for her work to promote bilingual early childhood.

Fold-Out Map and Statistics