Sherman Center Update
by Melissa Bailey, Program Coordinator

The Sherman Center’s newest initiative -- the Families, Libraries, and Early Literacy Project (ELP) -- is fueled by an unstoppable crew: Shalonda Howz - Director of the Curtis Bay Judy Center and her Family Services Coordinator, Michelle Daniels; Tessera Slade - Director of the Lakeland Judy Center and her Family Services Coordinator, Ivelisse Rodriguez; Kinshasa Vargas-Pile - Branch Manager of Enoch Pratt Library, Brooklyn Branch; the Enoch Pratt Library Early Literacy Programming Specialist, Heather Yost; and the Sherman Center staff. Together, we seek to promote early literacy development and kindergarten readiness through interactive workshop sessions with the families of children 0-3. This collaborative effort also seeks to acquaint parents with library resources and help to build their home libraries with selections from our Diverse Books Collection. At our quarterly ELP sessions, Heather Yost conducts stimulating read-a-louds and sing-alongs with participating families to model practices they can use at home. Then, while the young children are engaged in activities planned and coordinated by Judy Center staff and local community partners (e.g., My Gym, Brick Bodies, and Science Guys), Drs. Jennifer Mata-McMahon and Mavis Sanders from UMBC conduct workshops with families. In addition to providing families with research-based information on how they can support their children's literacy development and kindergarten readiness through home-based activities and play, Drs. Mata-McMahon and Sanders also engage families in theme-based, make-and-take activities. In addition, Ms. Yost and Ms. Vargas-Pile provide families with up-to-date information about physical and virtual library resources. Since ELP’s launch in February 2019, we have held six sessions with 89 families, registered all families to receive library memberships, and distributed 126 diverse books and useful information to assist families in supporting their children’s love of reading.

Featured Article: Embracing Translanguaging in the Early Childhood Classroom
By Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education/Sherman Center Research Faculty

Listening to Ofelia García’s (MuDiLe, 2017) lecture on the benefits of shifting our understanding of named languages (e.g., English, Spanish, French) from a hierarchical view to one that is more horizontal and leveled provides a perspective on Translanguaging that many educators would be willing to embrace. However, fully realizing the goals of Translanguaging requires a paradigm shift that goes well beyond merely allowing for codeswitching in the classroom. Teachers working under a Translanguaging framework, in which value is given to all the linguistic tools children bring into the classroom, need to surrender control over which language is used at any point in the learning process. It also requires erasing the categories of power assigned to languages and returning the power back to the speaker.

Adopting a Translanguaging framework can prove to be quite difficult since there is a chosen language in which children are currently tested in order to advance academically, and in which outcomes are measured with very high stakes for both students and teachers. During the 2019 Sherman Center Teacher Summer Institute (TSI) on Translanguaging in the early childhood classroom, we engaged in first understanding what Translanguaging entails, and then explored how it could best serve the needs of students attending Baltimore City Public Schools. Through the two-day workshop, it became clear that participating teachers from the four Sherman Center partner schools were not only willing to embrace this paradigm shift but in some cases, they had started to do so without knowing yet how to name it.

“However, fully realizing the goals of Translanguaging requires a paradigm shift that goes well beyond merely allowing for codeswitching in the classroom.”

On day one, teachers were introduced to Translanguaging by first exploring their own linguistic identity. We learned that because languages and dialects are so embedded in culture, and being in a culturally diverse urban environment, it is rare to find a true monolingual person, whose linguistic...
The Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (MECLP) Update
by Louise Corwin, Sherman Center Visiting Executive in Residence

Drawn from a pool of 44 applicants, the carefully selected inaugural cohort of 15 outstanding MECLP fellows represents the ethnic, geographic and affiliation diversity in Maryland’s early childhood community. MECLP’s first course, SHER 601 - Leading Change in Early Childhood Education, will be taught by Dr. Anne Douglass, UMass Boston, a recently appointed member of UMBC’s Graduate Faculty and will be offered by the Sherman Center and the Division of Professional Studies (DPS) at UMBC. SHER 601 builds on the research-based course developed by Dr. Anne Douglass and incorporates key competencies critical to supporting the field of early childhood in Maryland. Following an Orientation on December 7th, SHER 601 will begin in January and conclude with a capstone project in December 2020. A five year scale up of MECLP’s efforts includes graduating 100 fellows representing the variety of programs, classrooms and associated fields that make up Maryland’s early childhood system; designing and conducting a program and course evaluation; implementing a robust coaching model to mentor fellows after course completion; establishing an online professional learning community, and hosting annual leadership institutes.

For more information, please visit https://meclp.umbc.edu, or email Louise Corwin (lcorwin@umbc.edu) Visiting Executive in Residence, or Laurel Bassett (lbassett@umbc.edu) Graduate Assistant.

Research to Practice

In this short video clip, Olivia Grimes, kindergarten teacher at Maree G. Farring Elementary/Middle School, describes how she used Coat of Many Colors by Dolly Parton from the Sherman Center Diverse Books Collection to teach her students important lessons about the transformative power of kindness. To learn more about the Diverse Books Project and Collection, and view other teacher videos, please visit our web site.

By Dr. Susan Sonnenschein, Professor of Psychology, and Dr. Michele Stites, Assistant Professor of Education, UMBC.