



SHERMAN CENTER

for Early Learning
in Urban Communities

Director's Message

In the fall issue of the Sherman Center newsletter, we look back on lessons learned and forward to new ventures and partnerships for 2019. In our featured article, Amy Faust Fraser and Kristina Robertson, educational consultants who presented at our first Summer Teacher Institute in August, review two of the instructional strategies they shared. Additionally, Melissa Bailey, Sherman Center program coordinator, provides an update on activities conducted at our partner schools, including our two newest partners: Bay Brook and Curtis Bay Elementary/Middle Schools.

Looking forward to 2019, Louise Corwin, who joined the Sherman Center as Visiting Executive-in-Residence earlier this fall, describes the Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program, a new community partnership to further strengthen early childhood education in Maryland. Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon, a Sherman Center and education department joint faculty hire who also joined UMBC this fall, describes the groundbreaking research she is beginning with first grade teacher, Ana Gabriela Salas, and Sherman Center graduate assistant, Laurel Burggraf Bassett.

To close this issue, ESOL teacher, Debby Pastrana Williams, shares how she used *Separate is Never Equal* from our Diverse Books Collection to teach her young students important literacy and life lessons. For more information about the content in this newsletter or any of the Sherman Center's events and activities, please visit our [web site](#).

Mavis G. Sanders

Dr. Mavis G. Sanders is professor of education and inaugural director of the Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities at UMBC

Sherman Center Update

by Melissa Bailey

The Sherman Center's mission is in full throttle! We recently hosted the 2018 Summer Teacher Institute, a four-day professional development held at UMBC. Betsy and George Sherman, Jacqueline Hrabowski, and Lori Morgan from Lakeland Elementary/Middle School welcomed over 20 PreK through third grade ESOL, special education, and classroom teachers from both Lakeland and Maree G. Farring Elementary/Middle Schools. Keynote Speaker, Dr. Pamela Brillante, presented her research on creating inclusive early childhood classrooms for students with learning differences. Guest speakers, Amy Faust Fraser and Kristina Robertson, facilitated engaging activities and discussions around literacy for young English learners.

In October, we welcomed two new partners: [Bay Brook and Curtis Bay Elementary/Middle Schools](#). We are excited to work with Principal Monique Reese and Assistant Principal Breeanna Becker at Bay Brook and Principal Mark Bongiovanni and Educational Associate for Literacy Dr. Joy Guthrie at Curtis Bay to improve early learning experiences and outcomes. We have already begun this work. We launched the Diverse Books Project at Bay Brook and Curtis Bay in early October. In addition, in collaboration with the Shriver Center, we began a literacy volunteer program to place UMBC undergraduate students in early childhood classrooms at the schools to assist teachers with reading lessons and activities. Look for an update on this program in the spring 2019 issue of the newsletter.

Featured Article: Key Literacy Strategies for English Learners

by Amy Faust Fraser (aimsfaust@gmail.com) and Kristina Robertson (kmrobertz@gmail.com), Educational Language and Literacy Consultants

Every bilingual student comes to the classroom with unique strengths. Teachers can discover and build upon students' strengths by giving them scaffolded opportunities to interact meaningfully with high-quality, culturally diverse texts. Here we describe two such literacy strategies for young English learners that were presented at the [2018 Summer Teacher Institute](#): interactive read-aloud and mentor text.

Interactive read-aloud is a powerful strategy for teaching students to use academic language to talk about books, creating a meaningful opportunity for language production perfect for English learners and all PreK-3 students. Acquiring academic language occurs over time and interactive read-aloud provides multiple opportunities for practice and mastery. Teachers using interactive read-aloud can talk about the book's title, author, and illustrator, engage in thoughtful discussions with students, and model the sophisticated language that authors use. Interactive read-aloud also frees the listener from decoding and is supported by the oral reader's fluency, phrasing, and stress -- all elements of what are sometimes referred to as expression. Interactive read-aloud sets the scene for comprehending, and thinking and talking about exemplary texts.

Participants engaged in an interactive read-aloud using *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall, one of the texts available to them through the Sherman Center [Diverse Books Project](#). The presenter then used *Red* as a mentor text and participants learned how it could be used in multiple ways to guide student language and literacy learning.



From (L) to (R), Kristina Robertson, Mavis Sanders, Amy Faust Fraser, and Melissa Bailey

"Teachers can discover and build upon students' strengths by giving them scaffolded opportunities to interact meaningfully with high-quality, culturally diverse texts."

-Amy Faust Fraser and Kristina Robertson, Educational Language and Literacy Consultants.

Mentor texts are samples of literature to return to numerous times to help young writers learn how to do what they may not yet be able to do on their own. These texts are revisited many times to help students examine sentence structure, connect with their own memories, think about how a setting creates a mood, or find the places where an author "shows instead of tells." Thus, a mentor text becomes a coach as young writers study the craft of writing.

During the Summer Institute, educators learned three steps in using mentor texts.

- Step 1 is to read the text like a reader and for enjoyment.
- Step 2 is to analyze the text and read like a writer. This means to zoom in on a paragraph, a phrase, or language feature such as word choice, sentence structure, or organization, and ask critical questions such as, "Why did the author choose those adjectives? Why is the sentence organized that way?"
- In Step 3, the student emulates the mentor. Kelly Gallagher refers to this step as "lifting and borrowing" text. A teacher selects part of the text the class has been working with and creates a sentence or paragraph frame for students to copy and "fill in" with their own adjectives or to complete with their own subject, verb, object, or other specified content.

Continued on back...



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Research Notes

In 2016, as a kindergarten teacher at [Lakeland Elementary/Middle School](#), Ms. Ana Gabriela Salas noticed that even though the surrounding community and thus a high percentage of students at the school were Latinx and spoke Spanish as their home language, there were no programs being implemented at the school to address the specific language and cultural needs of these students and their families. With the support of the school principal, Mr. Najib Jammal, Ms. Salas took it upon herself to first research programs across the city and state addressing the needs of similar populations, and then design and implement a Dual Language Program (DLP) with her kindergarten class, with whom she worked through first grade. Today, Ms. Salas teaches first grade and has expanded the DLP to include kindergarten and second-grade teachers. Lakeland's three grade-level DLP is the first of its kind in Baltimore City Public Schools.

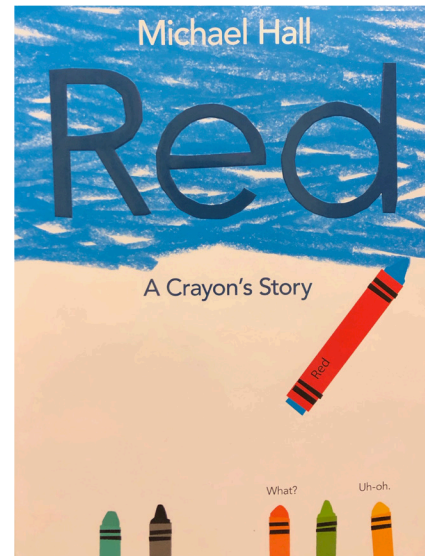
In January, Ms. Salas, Ms. Laurel Burggraf Bassett, a doctoral student in UMBC's Language, Literacy, and Culture program and Sherman Center graduate assistant, and I will begin a research study to document the evolution of Lakeland's DLP and evaluate its impact on student outcomes. The research will include interviews with key stakeholders in the school community as well as an examination of students' test scores in English/Language Arts and mathematics. The hope is that the study's findings will guide improvements of this innovative program and facilitate its replication in other public schools within Baltimore City and beyond.

[Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon](#) is associate professor of education and Sherman Center research faculty at UMBC.

This is not copying, this is borrowing until the student is comfortable doing it on their own. Exposing language learners and all students to this process allows them to acquire new and sophisticated language, which they in turn will make their own.

English learners have a lot of connections to make and ideas to share in class. Rich diverse texts, scaffolded support, and teachers who build the connection between language and literacy can ensure they succeed at both.

- Fountas, I.C. & Pinnell, G.C. (2017). *The Fountas & Pinnell Literacy Continuum: A Tool for Assessment, Planning, and Teaching* (Expanded editions). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Dorfman, L.R. & Cappelli, R. (2007). *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K-6*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Gallagher, K. (2011). *Write Like This: Teaching Real-World Writing Through Modeling & Mentor Texts*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.



The Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (MECLP)

by Louise Corwin

[MECLP, a new community partner of the Sherman Center](#), is designing a cohort-based leadership development academy for early and mid-career individuals with a broad range of backgrounds (e.g., roles, geography, race, ethnicity, gender) in early childhood and related fields.

The academy will incorporate best practices in key leadership competencies, reflect break-through thinking in education design, and be delivered over 12 months through face-to-face sessions and online modules. The curriculum will be project-based and include coaching and mentoring sessions and activities, field trips, and guest presentations to supplement required readings and individual and group assignments. The pilot cohort is expected to start in October 2019.

Through the leadership development academy, MECLP aims to:

- Enhance leadership in early childhood education and associated fields in order to significantly improve school readiness and related key outcomes

affecting young children, particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

- Increase the diversity of ECE leaders across the state.
- Position Maryland as a leader in developing strong early childhood education systems leaders.
- Explore opportunities in higher education to institutionalize leadership skills, knowledge, and content.

The MECLP Advisory Committee, comprised of Maryland and national leaders, will guide the development of academy content and curriculum, and cohort criteria and composition, as well as oversee MECLP's program evaluation and fund raising efforts. The Advisory Committee is co-chaired by Dr. Mavis Sanders and Dr. Rolf Grafwallner, Early Childhood Program Director, Council of Chief State School Officers.

For more information, please email [Louise Corwin](mailto:Louise.Corwin@umbc.edu), lcorwin@umbc.edu (Visiting Executive-in-Residence, Sherman Center) or Laurel Bassett, lburgg1@umbc.edu (graduate assistant, Sherman Center).

Research to Practice

In the short video clip below, Ms. Williams, ESOL teacher at Curtis Bay, details how she used *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh to teach her students about courage and the nation's ongoing struggle for equal rights.

