



SHERMAN CENTER

for Early Learning
in Urban Communities

Director's Message

In this third issue of the Sherman Center newsletter, we are excited to share the work we have initiated and continued to develop in 2019. Melissa Bailey, program coordinator for the Sherman Center, provides an update on our [partner school](#) activities including the implementation of our first spring teacher professional development and completion of the first year of the [Literacy Fellows Program](#). Louise Corwin, Visiting Executive in Residence, describes the continued evolution of the [Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program](#), which aims to ensure that Maryland remains a national innovator in the field. Describing progress in research funded by the Sherman Center, 2018 [Faculty Research Award](#) recipients, Dr. Kindel Nash and Joshua Michael, provide a summary of their study's early findings for young learners and their families. Faculty Research Award recipients for 2019, Drs. Susan Sonnenschein and Claudia Galindo, provide an overview of the multi-year study they will begin this fall. Finally, early childhood teachers, Sarah English and Sara Lakarosky, describe how they have used [books](#) to teach science, build cultural bridges, and promote respect for self and others. We hope you enjoy this issue and visit our [web site](#) to learn more about these and other Sherman Center activities.

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 just completed its first full year, and is moving at a rapid pace! We have officially moved into our newly renovated space in UMBC's Fine Arts Building, Suite 017. Nearby, in the Albin O'Kuhn Library, the Center hosted its first annual spring professional development (PD) for early childhood educators (pre-K-2) at our [four partner schools](#) - Bay-Brook, Curtis Bay, Lakeland, and Maree G. Farring. The teacher-led PD, held May 1, focused on Baltimore City Public Schools' new Wit & Wisdom curriculum and diverse books in early childhood classrooms. Guest speakers included: Ashley Cook, Director of Literacy, Language & Culture at Baltimore City Public Schools, Victoria Goddard-Truitt, Kindergarten teacher at Bay-Brook, Leslie Adams, 1st grade teacher at Curtis Bay, Kelsey Kodak, 1st grade teacher at Maree G. Farring, and Sara Lakarosky,

2nd grade teacher at Lakeland. Each teacher was recommended by school leaders and presented on instructional strategies for Wit & Wisdom. Our last guest speaker, Olivia Grimes, a [Sherman STEM Teacher Scholar](#) and Sherman Center student intern, presented on using the book, *Du Iz Tak?*, from our [diverse books collection](#) for an integrated English Language Arts/science lesson. The Sherman Center also completed the first academic year of its [Literacy Fellows Program](#). Program fellows and volunteers have helped to plant seeds of learning through their student-focused literacy activities in reading, writing, and vocabulary. Over 230 hours of volunteer service was provided at Bay Brook and 270 hours at Curtis Bay during the 2018-19 school year. The Sherman Center also launched a new literacy program for the families of children 0-3, but more about that in the fall issue!

Featured Article: Building Literacy Proficiency and Family Engagement at M.G. Farring Elementary/Middle School

by Kindel Nash, PhD, Associate Professor of Education, Joshua Michael, MEd, Doctoral Student, School of Public Policy, and Kris'tina Ackerman, Doctoral Student, Language, Literacy & Culture, UMBC

When young children receive high quality literacy instruction, their *lives* improve. Effective literacy instruction is associated with improved lifelong health, increased educational attainment, and higher economic opportunity¹. Literacy proficiency is a gateway to higher level science, technology, engineering, and mathematics learning, leads to advancement within professional fields, and is vital for effective citizenship in a democratic society². In addition to teachers, families play a critical role in young children's literacy development³. However, prevalent reading interventions and top-down approaches to family engagement often disempower families and communities and disconnect them from schools.

Flipping this paradigm, we used a grant from the Sherman Center to implement and evaluate a research-based reading strategy, Read Two Impress (R2I)⁴, at Maree G. Farring Elementary/Middle School. R2I follows the steps of the Neurological Impress Method, an intervention for students who read two or more years below grade level, where a tutor, seated on a student's dominant side, reads aloud a slightly challenging text expressively and slightly faster than the student while guiding the student's finger to track the text. This study of the effects of R2I was unique in that it included families; culturally diverse books, which have been linked to higher student comprehension and engagement; and was conducted in an urban school.

During five training sessions and twelve weeks of regular practice, we shared the R2I strategy with second grade students, who were struggling readers, and their families. We collected family



interview and student achievement data to measure the effects of the intervention. Four key findings emerged:

"This study of the effects of R2I was unique in that it included families; culturally diverse books, which have been linked to higher student comprehension and engagement; and was conducted in an urban school."

- Participating students demonstrated a statistically significant increase in reading fluency when compared to similar students who did not participate in the intervention
- R2I increased bonding and positive interactions between participating students and family members

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Research Notes

Improving Outcomes for Underserved Populations: An Examination of the Literacy Fellows Program

All students deserve to experience optimal educational opportunities for academic success throughout their formal schooling. As part of UMBC's commitment to this goal, the Sherman and Shriver Centers have implemented, for the first time this past academic year (2018-19), the Literacy Fellows Program. The program utilizes student volunteers from the UMBC community to assist early childhood classroom teachers with reading instruction. The goal is to improve young children's reading experiences and outcomes. Our multi-year study, which will begin in the 2019-2020 school year in two Sherman Center partner schools – Bay Brook and Curtis Bay, will seek to answer four questions. Specifically: (1) How is the Literacy Fellows Program implemented? (2) What challenges to implementation do the various stakeholders face? (3) What are the literacy and literacy-related outcomes for children who participated in the Literacy Fellows Program? (4) Are the potential benefits from the Literacy Fellows Program comparable across different groups of children (e.g., English learners, children who start school "not ready")? We will interview stakeholders, and observe classrooms and volunteer-child interactions. We will also collect school-administered reading scores and data on children's motivation for and engagement in reading-related activities. Results of our study will inform future volunteer literacy programs in Baltimore and similar urban settings.

by Dr. Susan Sonnenschein, Professor of Psychology, UMBC and Dr. Claudia Galindo, Associate Professor of Education, University of Maryland, College Park

- Participating students and families gained confidence as readers
- Bilingual families and students experienced improved fluency from the use of culturally diverse and bilingual books

These positive results suggest that R2I can be modified with the use of culturally diverse books to provide families in urban schools with a research-based strategy to build their children's reading confidence and literacy skills, even if they

The Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (MECLP) Update

by Louise Corwin

The Sherman Center's Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (MECLP) is preparing to launch its first initiative – a 12-month, hybrid leadership course, *Leading for Change in Early Childhood Education*. The course will be led by Dr. Anne Douglass, founding executive director of The Institute for Early Education Leadership and Innovation at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Adapted from Dr. Douglass' groundbreaking work to meet the needs of Maryland's early childhood professionals, the course makes use of a mix of in-person, daylong learning sessions; guest presentations and field trips; asynchronous online learning sessions; and individual and small group projects to build

have struggled with reading in the past.

¹Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Braveman, P., & Egerter, S. (2008). *Overcoming obstacles to health: Report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to the Commission to Build a Healthier America*. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

²National Literacy Trust. (2017). *Fake News and Critical Literacy*. Retrieved from <https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/fake-news-and-critical-literacy/>

³Clark, C. (2007). *Why it is important to involve parents in their children's literacy development*. National Literacy Trust. Retrieved at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED496346.pdf>

⁴Young, C., Rasinski, T., & Mohr, K. A. (2016). Read Two Impress. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(6), 633-636.

participants' leadership skills, knowledge, and dispositions.

A course announcement and application were released at the beginning of May to over 200 individuals, organizations, and agencies. The application deadline is June 21. MECLP's inaugural cohort of 14 early childhood professionals, with a minimum of a bachelor's degree who represent Maryland's ethnic, geographic, and affiliation diversity, will be selected in August and begin the course in December 2019. For more information, please visit the Sherman Center [web site](#) or email Louise Corwin (lcorwin@umbc.edu), Visiting Executive in Residence, or Laurel Bassett (lburgg1@umbc.edu), graduate program assistant.

Research to Practice

In the one-minute video clips below, 1st grade teacher, Sarah English (bottom left), and 2nd grade teacher, Sara Lakarosky (bottom right), both at Lakeland Elementary/Middle School, share how they used books from the [diverse books collection](#) to engage their students. Ms. English describes how she used *Du Iz Tak?* and *Red: A Crayon's Story* to promote classroom conversations about important topics, including respect for differences among individuals and cultures.



Ms. Lakarosky used *Separate is Never Equal* and *Green is a Chile Pepper* to make cultural connections for her students, generally, and English Learners, specifically. To learn more about the Sherman Center's [Diverse Books Project](#) and view other teacher [videos](#), please visit our [web site](#).

