



SHERMAN CENTER

for Early Learning
in Urban Communities

Director's Message

As we begin the final month of 2019, the fourth issue of the Sherman Center newsletter provides an opportunity to reflect on accomplishments and acknowledge a few of the many individuals who made these accomplishments possible. Our featured article, written by Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon, associate professor of education and Sherman Center research faculty, describes the importance of Translanguaging for early childhood classrooms in Baltimore – the topic of the [2019 Teacher Summer Institute](#). Melissa Bailey, program coordinator for the Sherman Center, provides an update on the [Families, Libraries, and Early Literacy Project](#), a quarterly initiative introduced this year. Louise Corwin, Visiting Executive in Residence, describes the ongoing activities of the [Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program](#), which will welcome its first cohort of 15 fellows this month. In "Research Notes," Dr. Susan Sonneschein, a 2019 Sherman Center Faculty Research Award recipient, and Dr. Michele Stites, former Sherman Center Advisory Board member, share highlights from their independent study examining how the parents of young children say teachers can help them to support math learning at home. Finally, in our "Research to Practice" section, Olivia Grimes, early childhood teacher at Maree G. Farring Elementary/Middle School, describes how she used a selection from the Sherman Center [Diverse Books Collection](#) to inspire and teach her young students. Please visit our [web site](#) to learn more about these, and other impressive people and projects that define the Sherman Center.

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, 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



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Research Notes:

What Parents of Young Learners Want (and Need) to Learn from Their Children's Teachers About Math

We recently used an online survey to learn what information parents want from their children's teachers to help their young children develop important academic skills. Many reported receiving too little information from their children's teachers about how to "do math." This is unfortunate because these parents were not confident about what they should do to develop their children's numeracy skills. Our findings suggest that teachers can build families' confidence and promote engagement in their young children's math learning through the following practices: (1) Suggest simple activities to make math a part of everyday routines and playtime. These should focus on fun activities within five key areas: counting and cardinality, operations and algebraic thinking, numbers and operations in base 10, measurement and data, and geometry. This is consistent with Common Core and will help children throughout their years in school. (2) Teach parents how to find the math in everyday activities like shopping and cooking. (3) Use reading to build children's math skills by suggesting a list of math storybooks or books where one can talk about math. This will help with both math and reading. (4) Take advantage of technology; but be sure and send home recommendations for apps and websites. (5) Send home newsletters and progress notes indicating what math skills to focus on or areas where their child may need some extra help. While many teachers send home math activities, the key is to make sure parents understand what is sent and how to use it.

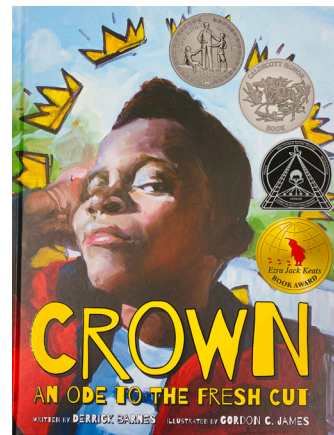
By Dr. Susan Sonnenschein, Professor of Psychology, and Dr. Michele Stites, Assistant Professor of Education, UMBC

repertoire is composed of tools stemming only from one language or dialect. Having understood it at the personal level, the teachers then explored how to take Translanguaging into their schools, given the specific linguistic demographics of their student populations. They learned about what to do in the classroom to support Translanguaging, and acted out activities by grade level, interacting and planning with colleagues across schools.

On day two, we focused on literacy, specifically on the interactive read aloud strategy as a way to promote biliteracy development for bilingual students while supporting Translanguaging in the classroom. Teachers watched videos of master teachers conducting read aloud activities. Then they planned and practiced activities for their own by grade levels using diverse books such as *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut* by [Derrick Barnes](#), keynote speaker for the TSI kickoff.

As I mentioned above Translanguaging is not a simple strategy, it is not another technique we adopt and add to our teacher toolkit; it requires a deep shift in our understanding and the way we relate to languages. I could not tell you with absolute certainty that all the teachers

that participated in the TSI achieved that level of profound transformation. However, I can say with complete confidence that the seed was planted, and these teachers are watering it by providing their students the opportunity to use their full linguistic repertoire in order to learn.



The Multilingualism & Diversity Lectures (MUDILE) 2017 [MuDile 2017]. (2017, October 11). Ofelia Garcia - Translanguaging [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=511CcrRrck0&list=PLbAlCh4XPO-b2Vj6uwCfAB-jf2aa4Pml0&index=11&t=303s>

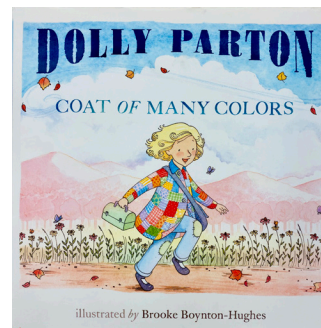
The Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (MECLP) Update

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 for 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 (lburgg1@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](#).

