Families Writing Together:
The Experiences of English Language Learner Families in a Writing Workshop

A Dissertation

Presented to

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Education

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a greater understanding of

English language learner (ELL) family involvement in school environments through the

lens of family literacy. This study was informed by literature from two fields: early

childhood writing and ELL family involvement. While some schools have focused on at-

home reading programs, little has been done to bring parents in as teachers, specifically

with writing instruction. In addition, for families of ELL students, the school can be an

intimidating and unfamiliar place because of language and cultural barriers; therefore

they may not be as involved in school programs.

For this study, I conducted a three-week summer writing workshop for area PreK-

2 ELL children and their families. Participants met three times a week for seventy-five

minutes each session. Oral stories served as the foundation for drafting written stories.

Thus, families—regardless of the language spoken—participated.

Four types of data were collected: field notes, conference logs, family writing

documents, and interviews. Analytical memos were written and shared with my peer

debriefer and members of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) research team.

My study and data analysis were guided by two questions:

- What were the experiences of ELL families in a summer writing
  workshop?

- What did I do as a facilitator that enabled family members to feel
  successful?

Using Erickson's (1986) model of analytic induction, my analysis of the data

revealed four findings. There were three findings pertaining to the experiences of ELL

families in a summer writing workshop: 1) Family involvement varies; 2) Family

member investment in the workshop's purpose; 3) All parents are teachers. One finding

emerged regarding to my role as a facilitator: I facilitated with authenticity. Expanding on

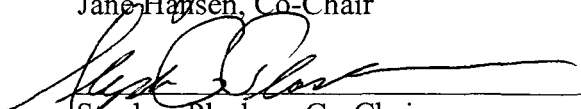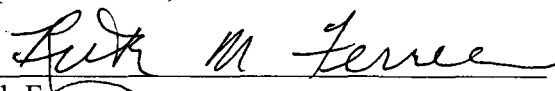this, I began with the writers and I valued the children's voices.

APPROVALS

Elementary Education
Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
Curry School of Education
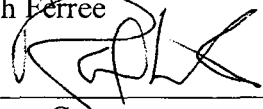University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, "Families Writing Together: The Experiences of English Language
Learner Families in a Writing Workshop," has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of
the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

Jane Hansen, Co-Chair

Stephen Plaskon, Co-Chair

Ruth Ferree

Robert Covert

3/19/10 Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my former first grade students and families at P.S. 128. Your stories were my motivation. Thank you for sharing with me and allowing me to learn from you. I am a better educator because of you all.

I dedicate the work behind this dissertation to the strongest woman I know, my grandma. I know you are proud.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Jane Hansen: thank you for all of your "YESSSS's" along the way. I am honored to have worked with you; it has been a life changing experience.

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To Bob Covert: thanking you for pushing me to think outside the box with my methodology and findings so I could accurately tell the story of this workshop.

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To Kim Lewinski—or whatever your name is—huge thanks for your on-going friendship and support each week on both the dissertation and motherhood. Your ability to do it all is inspiring.

To the families that participated in this workshop: thank you for giving me the opportunity to work with you all and opening your lives to me.

To my Mom and Dad. I look back on what got me to this point and it was lots drive, determination, and being true to what I believed in. Thank you for instilling those values in me. I admire you both so much and hope to be as amazing parents as you are.

To Calvin, my dissertation baby. Thank you for already being the incredibly patient, happy, and independent person you are. Some day I'll make it up to you for all of the time you spent in the swing and exer-saucer so I could write. Always follow your dreams and know that your dad and I are right behind you.

And Jason, the balance in my life. Vince Lombardi once said, " Teamwork is what the Green Bay Packers were all about. They didn't do it for individual glory. They did it because they loved one another." I could not have done this without you. All of my love and gratitude.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Each year my first grade class was roughly two-thirds English language learners (ELLs). Their writing was often one-line stories, such as "I go to the park." While this certainly was writing, I found students had difficulty telling me more details about their stories. When parent-teacher conferences arrived and I started the conversation about their student's writing progress, parents attention often immediately focused on the number grade. While the number system our school district used was irrelevant to me because it did not accurately reflect a student's growth, a number grade is what the majority non-English speaking parents understood. Parents would inform me they made sure their student's writing was "good on the homework", so they did not understand the low grade. Finally, during one conversation I asked a parent what she meant by "good." Then, in Spanish, the mother showed me how she would erase her daughter's handwriting if the letters were not made neatly. Ah-ha: their understanding of writing was how neat the print was. My students' parents and I had been operating under different understandings about what was and how the children were to make progress with writing. This conversation stayed because I realized this parent's experience reflected a larger issue: families of ELL students want to help, but often may not know how. Moreover, what families saw as help contrasted with the school's definition of academic help.

Thinking back on my classroom environment, I operated with the understanding that I had excellent family involvement[1]. The majority of students' families came to our monthly writing publishing parties. Frequent field trips and picnics allowed families to join the class on various outings. In addition, student-written weekly newsletters and bi-monthly progress reports kept families in the loop about their first grader. I realized with the exception of the beginning-of-the-year meeting I hosted on making first grade a success, none of the other family involvement opportunities addressed parent education. Thus, while I had invited families to be a part of their child's first grade experience, I never provided families with opportunities to become partners in their child's learning.

Influences that Inform this Study

This study was situated within the fields of ELL family involvement and writing instruction. Numerous research studies support the benefits of parental involvement (Sheldon, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Yet the school context can be intimidating for many families of ELLs. While parents may want to see and help their child be successful in school, the language and cultural barriers can deter parents from seeking out and providing home support (Sosa, n.d.). Engagement programs should specifically target this population because of its increasing size and the particular logistical, attitudinal, and expectation barriers (Sosa, 1997) to family involvement this population faces.

The writing field is an excellent context to explore the topic of family involvement for ELL students because it invites many different voices and languages to be shared. First, families construct literacy meanings in various ways based on the worlds

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[1] The term "family" will be used instead of "parent" in order to acknowledge the diverse home environments in which children are reared and supported.

in which they live (Compton-Lilly, 2003). With diverse populations, writing values the participants' diversity, yet still assists in academic instruction. Second, a workshop addressing writing instruction connects with family literacy (Taylor, 1983); families are the child's first teacher. Third, the idea of choice (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 2003) is a central feature of a writing workshop. Participants may write in any format or language they choose. Native language books, for example, could be written to develop native language abilities, while still developing literacy concepts (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). Finally, written and spoken language share many similar aspects (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2004). Using writing, with an emphasis on oral story-telling is applicable for ELLs because the concepts and functions of language can be learned in any language (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). Thus, both family and child participants are not limited in participation because of language barriers.

Purpose of this Research

This research addressed family involvement, specifically focused on education parents about their children as writers. While some schools have focused on at-home reading programs, little has been done to inform family members about writing instruction. In addition, this research was conducted with families of ELL students, for whom the school can be an intimidating and unfamiliar place because of language and cultural barriers; therefore they may not be as involved in school programs. This workshop served purposes within two different contexts: for participants and for the broader, research and practitioner community.

The purpose of this study for the family participants was as follows:

- Encourage family members to feel successful and capable in their abilities to help their children as writers.

The purpose of this study within the academic and practitioner community was to:

- Examine effective family engagement experiences for family members of ELL children
- Examine family members' self-efficacy in their ability to help their children as writers.

Description of the Study

I conducted a qualitative study from the interpretivist paradigm (Erickson, 1986) to examine the topic of ELL family involvement within the writing workshop context. For three weeks over the summer 2009 vacation, I conducted an ELL family writing workshop. Prior to the start of the workshop, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Virginia approved the study (see Appendix A). The workshop occurred in a medium-size university town in Virginia. Participants were defined as ELL children entering PreK through second grade and their family members. Participants came three times a week to the workshop for seventy-five minutes, with the expectation families write on the weekends.

In this study, I assumed many roles ranging from facilitator, participant, observer, and even ride organizer. My facilitator's role included conducting mini-lessons, modeling writing, and conferring. Before the study began, I created a long-term outline, providing a brief description of what would be accomplished by the participants on each day of the workshop. I collected four primary sources of data: observations, conference notes, document collection, and participant interviews.

I used analytic induction (Erickson, 1986) to analyze the data. I created a set of linked assertions and establish evidentiary warrants for those assertions, in order to provide an interpretation about the phenomenon of ELL family involvement and my decisions as a facilitator. A rich description of my methodology is provided in Chapter 3.

Potential Significance

Thinking back to the conversations I had with my students' parents, one point always resonated: all parents want the best for their child. Sadly, many children, however, are in poor school environments. At the 2009 International Reading Association conference, I attended a symposium presentation on the persistence of the achievement gap. Professors from various fields in education shared their research and thoughts on what could be done to effectively address the achievement gap. A paper written by Gordon (2009), Professor Emeritus at Teachers College Columbia University, stated parental engagement as the next step in closing the achievement gap. While there has been a tremendous push to improve our schools, there must be an equal push in parental engagement. By parental engagement, Gordon meant: "engagement in the active support of the academic and personal development of their children" (p.5), instead of the traditional involvement in school activities. Gordon's type of family involvement provides tremendous benefits for students in both academic and other matters related to school (Fan & Chen, 2001: Sheldon, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Family involvement, specifically addressing parent education, could be another avenue for aggressively attacking the achievement gap.

This study attempted to uncover a deeper understanding of the area of ELL family involvement. When applying this to the larger context, an understanding of involvement

barriers can be used when developing partnerships and programs for ELLs and their parents. This is especially important since schools' ELL student populations are significantly increasing. Second, this study adds to the body of knowledge about early childhood ELL writers.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to situate my study within the current research fields of writing instruction and family involvement, specifically for families of ELL students. I begin by reviewing writing instruction, with a specific focus on the early-childhood and ELL sub-group. Then, I review family involvement as it relates to families of ELLs and writing instruction. Next, given the current field of writing instruction and family involvement, I review the need for creating more family involvement programs for the ELL sub-group that address writing education. Finally, I end with my research questions.

Writing Instruction

Writing instruction has drastically changed in the past thirty years. Previously, writing was viewed as a product, created by a series of steps. When writing is taught from this component-model approach, broken down into a series of isolated tasks, students lose interest and motivation in writing (Graves & Stuart, 1985). Rather, students' natural readiness for writing and curiosity should be engaged in what is now called the writing process (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). The process consists of: rehearsal, drafting, revision, and editing (Murray, 1985). While writers go through, in general, the same process, it is flexible and individual (Ray, 1999) for each writer and each situation.

In classrooms, students' voices are valued and heard and students develop a sense of authority through the power of becoming authors (Graves, 1978). The

following section will review research on writing instruction, in the context of a writing workshop, for early childhood (preK-2) writers, specifically looking at how instruction is differentiated or the process varies, for ELLs.

A Framework: Writing workshop. Writing workshop (Atwell, 1987; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001) is a somewhat familiar context in classrooms across the country. It centers on student choice, providing supportive evaluation that energizes writers, studying the students' writing, studying the students as writers, and basing instruction on the students' strengths and weaknesses (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Student choice in what to write about, in what form, and for what purpose is essential because it allows writers to engage in what they know (Graves, 2003) and provides them with authentic opportunities to practice what they are learning (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). The workshop, while flexible in nature, uses routine components to provide structure for writers.

Structure. Daily time needs to be set aside just for writing to encourage students to just write. Ray and Cleveland (2008) recommend teaching young writers within a writing workshop context, ranging sixty to seventy minutes in length. Typically, the writing workshop is broken down into a short mini-lesson; a long writing time, and ends with a brief sharing period. This three-part block provides the structure of the basic workshop. Encouraging choice is reflected in the structure of this environment. The set-up of the classroom allows both student and teacher movement for sharing and conferring, and writing materials are placed in a way for students to use materials independently, without teacher assistance or permission.

Listening and responding to the writer. The mini-lesson, writing, and sharing periods during the writing workshop allow the community of writers to be listened and responded to.

Mini-lessons. The term "mini-lessons" (Calkins, 1986/1994) refers to the part of the workshop when the teacher directly instructs the student writers how to do something new in their writing or reinforces something the students are doing. The teacher's ideas for mini-lessons are gathered from what the teacher has observed about the writers. This "kidwatching" (Ellis & Marsh, 2007, p.56) reflects the listening and responding aspect of writing instruction within a writing workshop.

The types of mini-lessons typically fall into four categories: procedural, writer's processes, qualities of good writing, or editing skills (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). This whole-group instruction is concise and ranges from five to ten minutes in length. Many times, other literature, whether it is from a children's author, the teacher's writing, or a student author in the class, is the material used in the mini-lesson.

Conferences. During the independent writing time, the teacher conducts conferences with individual writers, or sometimes even small groups. Conferring with writers allows the teacher to learn more about them and how to support them in future endeavors. A conference follows a typical structure with the teacher: researching, deciding, teaching, and linking (Calkins, Hartman, & Whit, 2005). While each of these steps is differentiated for the particular writer, each step is present in many conferences. In the research phase, the teacher pulls on previous information about the writer, as well as observes and interviews. This is done to both understand what the writer is trying to do as well as his or her intentions because the writer may not be cognizant of what s/he is

doing (p.7). Next, the teacher decides what to teach. This decision is informed by the research phase and what the teacher has gathered about the child's original purpose and meaning in the writing. In this step, it is important for the teacher to choose something the child can apply immediately and in the future, while focusing on the writer—not the product. Then, the skill is taught either through a guided practice, a demonstration, an explicit example, or inquiry. Finally, the conference concludes with a link, confirming what the writer has done and how this is applicable in the child's current piece of writing and/or future writing.

Sharing. Another portion of the writing workshop consists of writers sharing what they have written; this lasts approximately ten minutes. In this portion of the writing workshop, writers share with the focus being on listening and responding from peers (Ellis & Marsh, 2007; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Sharing provides writers not only with peer feedback and suggestions, but also an authentic audience to whom in which to read. This authentic element behind sharing is motivating for writers and increases their desire to write more and better (Ellis & Marsh).

As in the other components of the writing workshop, sharing is flexible. Mermelstein (2007), former teacher-researcher and literacy consultant, groups sharing into four different categories: content, craft, process, and progress. These various categories allow different elements of writing to be highlighted within the writing community. Sharing formats can include: the whole group Author's Chair (Graves & Hansen 1983); small-group; pair-share. The chosen format for sharing reflects the purpose of writers' needs. Writing pieces can be unfinished or finished, depending on the teacher's rationale. Sharing unfinished work can allow a writer to get peer input and

feedback on what to do next. Writers should not be forced to share, regardless of the purpose. Rather, the writing workshop environment should allow writers to feel comfortable to share (Ellis & Marsh, 2007).

Early Childhood Writing. The following section addresses research pertaining directly to early childhood writers.

The young writer. The backbone to early childhood writing is respect for the writers and their communicative attempts, whether oral or written (Avery, 2002; Calkins, Hartman, & Whit, 2005; Shagoury, 2008). Teachers working within this mindset believe even the youngest writers have something to say when they write; they believe the children are writers (Ray & Glover, 2008). In order to find out what these writers truly have to say, writing needs to be authentic. Authenticity (Lindfors, 2008) is the essence of young children's writing because "writing is a tool to carry out the child's communication work" (p.24). It is in this focus on authenticity that writing is developmentally appropriate for young children. Meier (2000) elaborates on this by describing how the focus of children doing prescribed literacy activities (i.e. worksheets) do not allow children to have active literacy engagement because they are removed from the product. Essentially, the writing must be meaningful for the writer, not necessarily the educator. The teacher's instructional decisions are based upon listening and responding to the child's writing. Instructional decisions acknowledge the equal importance of both the writer and the writer's age in order to develop developmentally appropriate writing invitations (Ray & Glover, 2008).

Stories. Young children benefit from the numerous stories that fill their school day because they learn about the "symbolic potential of language and its power to create

possible or imaginary worlds through words" (Wells, 1985, p.156). Wells' description of the importance of stories and their connection to language explain the use stories play for enabling the young writer. Young children learn from authors through the stories that are either read or told to them. These stories are told and shared in various forms ranging from read-alouds, mentor texts, and oral stories.

Read-alouds. Read-alouds support young writers in various ways. First, writers learn about the concept of authorship (Ray & Glover, 2008). Not only do teachers read these books, but also classes then have conversations about how the authors and illustrators have chosen to compose their books. These conversations then transfer to children's own writing and discussion of their books. Re-reading books and reading multiple books by the same author help further the development of authorship.

Second, writers learn about story language. In a kindergarten classroom where I conducted writing research during the 2008-2009 school year, the phrase "Once Upon a Time" was seen throughout the students' writing. Adalbert (a pseudonym) was the first student to use this in his writing. I asked Adalbert where he learned about "Once upon a time." His response, "I hear it in stories." At home, Adalbert's mother had read several fairy tales that began this way and he carried the idea over into his writing. Then, when he read his writing to his classmates, they heard how he began his stories and started doing the same. Through the act of hearing authors' stories, both in and out of class, the students in this kindergarten classroom learned how to apply story language to their own writing.

Finally, read-alouds the children hear during the writing period help develop schema about the students' worlds. In diverse classrooms this is particularly important

because the read-alouds serve as literacy invitations for the children in the particular classroom; children need to see themselves in what is being read in order to participate in the classroom (Van Sluys, 2005).

Mentor-texts. While the previous section described the benefits of any daily read-aloud for young children, mentor texts (Ray, 1999) refer to the more specific literature and media sources writers use when writing. Mentor texts can extend beyond the fiction genre to include any type of genre or media source that is helpful for the particular writer. However, the distinguishing factor with mentor texts is the intentionality and purposes the book or media source serves. Parsons, (2005), a first grade teacher-researcher, has her writers read the books they chosen as mentor texts so the students can gain a familiarity with the authors' craft in order to help them start applying the craft the particular writers use.

Story-telling. While stories can be shared with young writers in the pages of a book, stories can also be shared orally. For young children, talking serves as the foundation for writing because it is the starting point for young writers; they all come to school talking (Horn & Giacobbe, 2007). Conversations and story telling are essential to writing because they teach students about a story's structure and purpose before having to actually write; they connect oral and written language. When students tell stories, they learn about the craft of writing in five ways: (1) stories are specific in what they tell; (2) order and organization are essential for a story line; (3) the audience must be engaged; (4) talking allows writers to think through ideas before writing; and (5) when telling stories, they are revised (p.16). In addition, this story telling is authentic because it is about

something the young writers know or has happened to them; the oral story is being used for the writers' communicative purposes.

Horn and Giacobbe (2007) stress, since writers are supported in the physical print-making, they also need to be supported in their story-telling because that is where their writing begins. Children can be supported with story-telling through the use of read-alouds and various literature props (Tunks & Giles, 2007) or gestures and teacher modeling (Horn & Giacobbe, 2007). In classrooms that use Horn and Giacobbe's story-telling as a component of their writer's workshop, children tell stories together at the beginning of the workshop and then gradually stories are recorded into the Drawing and Writing Book. The children's oral language abilities are then additionally supported through read-alouds and interactive writing.

Oral language and writing. As highlighted in the previous section, writing builds on oral language. The connection between oral language and writing is especially significant for early childhood writers because it helps establish what a story is and connects oral and written language. Oral language is the base for building many writing skills because oral language and written language share similar aspects of language (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2004). Both require knowledge and understanding of function, meaning, form, and the connection between meaning and form (McGee & Richgels, 2008; Meier, 2000; Otto, 2006).

Writing lends well to conversation because of the innate desire children have to talk while they create (Ray & Glover, 2008). When children write, conversations are beneficial. First, oral language experiences are important for thinking of ideas. Vygotsky (1986) elaborated on the cognitive connection between oral language and writing by

explaining conversation is essential for forming ideas and establishing meaning; speaking is thought being created and expressed. Elaborating on this, Glover (2009) states, "for young writers, talking is prewriting because if a child can talk about it, s/he can write about it" (p.31). Second, conversations while writing reinforce story sequencing, plot, and characters (Ray & Glover, 2008).

Making a mark. Making a mark for young writers involves two separate processes: the actual motor skills involved and the understanding that marks mean something.

Fine motor skills. For a young writer to make a physical mark on a piece of paper, many fine motor skills are used. Physical developmental areas in writing include: shoulder and wrist muscles, finger manipulation and dexterity, pincer grip, finger strength and control, fine motor control, and tactile/kinesthetic awareness (Tunks & Giles, 2007, p.29). Not all young writers have developed these skills; therefore many early childhood teachers facilitate growth in these areas through various centers and activities. Tunks and Giles recommend children practice print-making by experimenting with an assortment of materials, such as sand, water, and finger-paint, so they can develop necessary fine motor skills, but also practice letter making. In addition, writing materials (white paper, larger markers, easels, etc) should be developmentally appropriate.

Print awareness. Children learn about the functions of print in real-life environments that are then reinforced and developed through dramatic play (Schickedanz & Casbergue, 2004). For example, children in dramatic play centers can be observed writing down orders as they play restaurant or stuffing paper into the class mailbox. When toddlers and preschoolers first pick up a crayon and make a scribble, the

kinesthetic motion and the visual appeal of seeing the marks on the paper engages young children (Gibson & Yonas, 1967; Schickedanz & Casbergue, 2004); there is no communicative purpose behind these first marks. For the beginning writer, both the written marks and the pictures are synonymous in their meaning because they are both ways to convey meaning for young writers (Shagoury, 2009).

As print exposure increases, and children develop an understanding of the alphabetic principle, written marks and pictures become separate types of marks. When children first start adding writing to their pictures, their marks may have numerous combinations and shapes because they have not yet learned there are only a finite number of letters (Schickedanz & Casbergue, 2004). As children learn more about letters, they learn certain shapes, such as diagonal lines, appear in letters. They start to explore with these combinations, initially writing what feels most comfortable for them, such as writing in only uppercase letters. Eventually, the letter-like-forms become actual letters. Children's early writing pieces may show phonemic understanding, depending on their prior knowledge of letters and letter sounds. It is important for educators to remember is children's print awareness is a process and develops at different speeds for each writer. Educators should be aware of where each writer is in this process so they know how to best support the writer's development (Schickedanz & Casbergue, 2004).

Writing workshop for young children. Ray and Cleveland (2004) describe writing workshop for young children as a time for them to "make language work—at generating text—all on their own" (p.39). What writers do in a writing workshop is an exemplary example of authenticity in writing (Lindfors, 2008) because writers give written language to their oral language (Meier, 2000). Since authenticity is the core of the

writing workshop, it is a developmentally appropriate practice to use with early childhood writers. In the workshop, children not only go through the same processes adult writers do, but the purpose of writing is for the children to share and be read. This idea of making "stuff" (Ray & Cleveland, 2004), or books, with young children provides the structure for writing routines to be established and it scaffolds writing tasks. As with older writers, in order for children to understand they are writers, writing workshop must be implemented on a daily basis to provide children with lots of experience in writing (Ray & Cleveland).

Environment. The writing environment for young writers parallels the typical format: moveable space, access to materials, routines, and consistent writing. However, it is particularly important for young writers to be in print-rich environments (Ray & Cleveland, 2004; Ray & Glover, 2008). The previous section on read-alouds, for example, supports this importance. Writing environments should support what writers do, whether it be through read-alouds, conversations, materials, etc. (Ray & Glover, 2008).

Idea generating. Choice in writing topics is as equally important for young writers. Prompts or story starters are not authentic ideas because children are not involved with the story idea and therefore do not grasp the rationale behind the ideas (Ray & Cleveland, 2004). Graves (2003) suggests starting with the personal narrative genre since it is a way for children to write about something they know—the world around them. Then, through sharing with writers and through read-alouds, they learn about other ways and genres of writing. Children's interaction with their environment also impacts their writing ideas. Dyson's (1997, 2001) research on young writers shows, for example,

popular media influences children's writing topics. It is important to value and acknowledge whatever ideas the child generates because it is the child's authentic idea.

Mini-lessons. Mini-lessons (Calkins, 1986) in early-childhood reflect the writing workshop format. They should be brief and concise, but still teach the writers something they can apply to their writing and have been derived from the teacher observing and interacting with the writers. At this age, mini-lessons may also focus on teaching or demonstrating a writing behavior or how to use materials in the writing center. Ray and Cleveland (2004) elaborate that mini-lessons should not prescribe to writers what they must do, but rather give them ideas or "possibilities" (p.85) for making their writing better. Avery (2002) groups her mini-lesson topics into four categories: procedures, strategies writers use, qualities of good writing, and conventions of language. Avery uses teacher modeling, whether by a direct demonstration, think-aloud, or a role-play allows to teach her writers to see how to apply or use the skill being taught in the mini-lesson. Horn and Giacobbe (2007) also use mini-lessons to teach young writers how to draw. Drawing is important for young writers because it is a basic way of showing meaning and it allows children to reveal more depth to their stories (p. 62). For this reason, children need to be coached and supported in how to draw, just as they are with other writing conventions, etc.

Conferences. Research (Avery, 2002; Shagoury, 2008) on conferring with young writers follows Calkins, Hartman, & White's (2005) structure: research, decide, teach, and link. While there are variations on the exact implementation, the focus is still on the writer. Shagoury, researcher and education professor specializing in language and literacy, incorporates teacher reflection about the writer's knowledge about the world and

language, as well as the intent of the piece when conferring with young writers. Avery, a veteran first grade teacher, initiates each of her conferences with: "Tell me about your writing." Her rationale is by using the word 'writing' she reaffirms whatever the child has done (scribbles, a picture, random letters, etc)—is indeed writing (p.68). This affirmation helps develop the child's identity and confidence as writers. In addition, it allows the teacher to listen and to respond to the writer's words and intentions, rather than the piece of writing.

While writers vary, conferences for young writers mainly involve focusing on the drawings and helping writers find or develop their story to tell (Calkins, Hartman, & White, 2005). Avery (2002) listens and responds to her students by focusing on the important details in her students' stories and follows up with specific questions about the writer: What was that like for you?; How did you know how to do this?; or, Why did you decide to put this in? (p.146). By asking these specific questions, Avery learns more about the writer and can thus respond to him or her and the corresponding writing intentions.

The young, English language learner writer.

Oral language and English language learners.

Language acquisition. There are five stages of second language acquisition: preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced (Freeman & Freeman, 2001). Each language stage describes the type of language behavior children demonstrate, such as the number of utterances and utterance length. ELLs must also attain proficiency in two types of English: social conversation and academic language. Social conversation is mastered in approximately three to five years,

whereas academic language (i.e., vocabulary), takes anywhere from four to seven years (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). Mastery of the initial language, though, will help in learning a sequential language because the language foundation has already been established (Tabors, 2008).

The learning environment. As a result of the increased oral language demands, learning environments for ELLs should be rich in language, with numerous opportunities for language interaction and exposure in order for ELL students to secure oral language skills. ELLs' learning environments should expose them to meaningful language experiences that link written and oral language (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004; Ernst & Richard, 1994-1995; Tabors, 2008). Read-alouds, for example, are helpful for connecting oral and written language because of continued exposure to English, whether through hearing the book or text-talk with peers, and even some familiarity with plots (Ernst & Richard, 1994-1995; Wells, 1985).

Writing workshop with English language learners.

Value for the students. The writing workshop is an excellent opportunity for ELL writers to express themselves in an authentic manner. The choice in writing topic is a way for ELL writers to gain understanding in a new language and/or culture (Hubbard & Shorey, 2003). Writers should be encouraged to write in any language they can and use pictures to show meaning. Studies (Hubbard & Shorey, 2003; Laman & Van Sluys, 2008) of classrooms in which ELL writers were encouraged to write in whatever language they felt most comfortable found this to be beneficial because writers "deliberately chose" which language to write in. These learning environments draw upon research that acknowledges the importance of ELL students pulling upon their native language, while

learning English (Cummins, 1996; Freeman & Freeman, 2001). Skills, such as details, learned and practiced in the native language could be later transferred to English (Hubbard & Shorey, 2003).

Laman and Van Sluys (2008) elaborated on how all writers, regardless of language background, in these classroom contexts become language learners. Through their peers' writing, native and non-native English speakers were able to explore and learn about different languages. This language learning is one example of how the writing workshop is filled with occasions for meaningful language experiences, particularly because of the chance for ELLs to work with peers. Publishing is another meaningful language experience for ELL students because of the collaboration and conversation with peers that is involved in the process (Ernst & Richard, 1994-1995).

The teacher's role. In order for ELL writers to be engaged during their writing workshop, teachers must use a great deal of intentionality in their decision-making and planning. The selection of mentor texts (Ray, 1999) for writing workshops is especially important for ELL writers. Diverse mentor texts, both in content and format, allow writers to use the books as tools for story structure and plot or word labeling as they learn new languages (Araujo, 2002; Laman & Van Sluys, 2008). Some writers even connect with the author's lives, such as Julia Alvarez (Hubbard & Shorey, 2003). The teacher's choice of mentor texts addresses the writers' diversity, yet scaffolds their language learning.

Conferring. Calkins, Hartman, & White (2005) recommend various strategies when conferring with ELLs, depending on their language acquisition stage. For example, in the preproduction and silent stage, observe how the writer uses his or her native

language. When conferring, the teacher should model through behavior that s/he is interested in what the child has written and phrase questions with 'yes' or 'no' answers to avoid confusion. In the early production stage, the teacher should interact with the child's writing, but also extend on the child's responses to model language and build vocabulary. Joint picture labeling is a great opportunity, for example, to help ELL writers increase their English vocabulary. In the speech emergence stage, the teacher should continue expanding and modeling language. An excellent way to do this is by having the writers read their writing to the teacher or peers. At this stage, ELL writers can be taught other strategies, such as spelling and writing rehearsal. Regardless of the language production stage, the focus should remain on the writer's writing, not the writer's spoken words.

Family Involvement

Family involvement is a relatively new aspect of schools' functions. With the publication of the Coleman Report in 1966, the Great Society Programs of the 1960s marked the first time parents were seen as partners in education because of various programs' requirements of parent participation (Bermudez, 1994). Fifty years later, research has shown parental involvement has meaningful effects on all students' academic achievement, regardless of grade, socio-economic status, or school location (Fan & Chen, 2001; Sheldon, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Currently, though, schools' ELL populations have dramatically grown, increasing by 57% from 1995-2005 (EPE Research Center, 2009, as cited in Maxwell, 2009, p.10). With schools becoming increasingly diverse, in students' home, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, schools have implemented new strategies and programs to engage families of ELLs. These family groups experience barriers as they enter schools. The traditional

methods of family engagement are not sufficient in overcoming involvement barriers because they do not attempt to develop trust between the school and the families, a key element to successful family involvement (Epstein et al, 2002 & Mapp, 2003).

Types of family involvement. Epstein, a researcher in school, family, and community partnerships, has done numerous studies on the types of family-school involvement, as well as its positive outcomes on behavior, academic performance, and school attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; 2005). As the director of the Center of School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins, her work aims to enable schools to better involve families and communities. Rather than having a conflictual relationship with parents and family members, she advocates schools should see families as partners in order to further develop trust and respect. Her most notable research is the framework for the six different types of family involvement (1995, 2002, p.25). This model, rather than being deficit based, is a tiered-system for schools to develop comprehensive family involvement programs.

Type 1 Parenting: Providing basic care for children

Type 2 Communicating: Verbal and written about child's progress and school events

Type 3 Volunteering: Parent support for class or school events

Type 4 Learning at Home: Activities designed and implemented for parents to do at home with child to support learning

Type 5 Decision Making: Contributing to the educational decisions being made

Type 6: Collaborating with the Community: Linking the school with outside business and organizations

Each level of involvement within the framework has challenges, suggestions for future growth, and implications. A thorough and well-developed school plan for family

involvement incorporates all six types. While each type of family involvement exhibits different characteristics, the central idea behind each is there is some element of care that requires trust and respect (Epstein et al., 2002, p.25). Research (Mapp, 2003) found family trust to be an important factor that influences initial involvement and extent of the involvement. Trust between families and schools reduce the impact of barriers to family involvement.

Barriers to involvement faced by ELL families. Before implementing and developing specific engagement programs, it is imperative for school leaders and teachers to understand the particular barriers of the cultural groups they serve so strategies implemented can address those barriers. The barriers Hispanic families face are grouped into three categories: logistics, attitudinal, and expectations (Sosa, 1997).

Logistical barriers. Logistics constitute the typical barriers and are more superficial in nature, such as time, money, safety, and childcare. Since these barriers are fairly straightforward and common, solutions are easier to identify and implement. In contrast, attitudinal and expectations barriers are more complex and personal, therefore, making them harder to identify, relate to, and resolve. However, these would be the more significant barriers to overcome because of the trust required and their personal nature.

Attitudinal barriers.

Uncertainty. Attitudinal barriers include uncertainty, dissatisfaction, and communication (Sosa, 1997). Uncertainty deals with parents being unclear of their roles in the school setting. Nicolau and Ramos (1990) described the cause of ambiguity in school roles:

> The U.S. school system assumes that parents will take some responsibility for their children's success in formal education...Most low-income Hispanic

immigrant and migrant parents are unfamiliar with this role. In their countries the role of parents and the role of school in relation to education are sharply delineated and divided: Parents have a serious duty to instill respect and proper behavior in their children. That is a parent's job. It is the school's job to instill knowledge. Teaching is not the parents' business. (p.13)

As a result, Nicolau and Ramos continue, Hispanics view schools and teachers as authority figures in their field and, therefore it is disrespectful to question the school or initiate contact. Parents think they are fulfilling their responsibilities by providing basic needs, such as food, clothing, and even managing behavior. However, since this does not align with the school's involvement expectations, assumptions can be made that Hispanic parents do not care about their children's academic success.

Dissatisfaction. Parental dissatisfaction can range from general unhappiness with their quality of life, to frustration with not being able to fully help their children, and discontent with their own schooling experience. Second and third-generation Hispanic parents possibly had negative past school experiences, or may have even been dropouts. The desire to be involved in schools, or even communicate with their child's teacher, may be inhibited by past feelings of school failure despite their desire for their child to succeed (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990). This can again lead to misleading and even damaging assumptions about parents because of unawareness about causes of low-engagement.

Communication. Communication is an attitudinal barrier with many dimensions. First, there is a difference in language. Despite having numerous translators at my school, they were unavailable at times, such as parent-teacher conferences. Students then translated for non-Spanish speaking teachers. Not only did it detract from the professionalism of the conference, but also it placed students in awkward positions and the conversations could be misinterpreted. Second, there are different cultural styles in

communication. Americans are typically formal and direct, whereas Hispanics are usually more casual (Espinosa, 1995). Misconceptions may result because of the variation in communication styles, which impact the decision about whether or not to communicate again. Third, communication is a barrier because of the complexity of the school system, both in its language and structure. Many Hispanic parents, even those who are fluent in English, are daunted by the school system's bureaucracy and feel they have no right to question it (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990). Any one of these factors, or a combination, may result in a hesitation, or lack of contact with the teacher and school.

   Expectations barriers. These relate to the previously discussed attitudinal barriers because uncertainty, dissatisfaction, and communication help form expectations of a person, situation, or a group. For instance, schools and teachers have minimal expectations for parent involvement and can be negatively impacted when parents do not fulfill them (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Hispanic parents, mainly recent immigrants, may have difficulty fulfilling them due to other circumstances. Commin's (1992) report on the experience of Mexican immigrant families found more urgent concerns, such as housing, immigrant status, paperwork, etc, took priority over school tasks. As a result, both parties form negative expectations of the other party. For example, parents may refuse to become involved with a teacher/school because they are deemed as uncaring.

   An in-depth awareness of the various barriers Hispanic families may face decreases the chance for misconceptions and false judgments. In addition, many of the barriers share the commonality of preventing either initial or further communication. When there is little to no openness to communicate, it is difficult for trust to be established. Sosa (1997) stated while not all of the described barriers may be prevalent, it

is important for classroom and school engagement programs to recognize which ones are, acknowledge them as valid apprehensions, and develop strategies to gain trust and engage families.

English language learner family involvement programs. This section will discuss how various districts and schools have successfully involved families of ELLs and how they connect to Tschannen-Moran's (2004) components of trust: benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence. Since there are a plethora of ethnic groups, this section will address solely engaging Hispanic ELL families because of the large numbers of Hispanic students in today's schools, as well as my personal interest based on teaching a Hispanic student body. In addition, the programs address many of the earlier identified Hispanic-specific barriers to family engagement.

Parent education programs. In her three-year ethnographic study of a primarily Mexican-American school in southern California, Delgado-Gaitán (1990), found that while Spanish-speaking parents believed in home support and attempted to help their children with homework, parents had a different understanding of what "help" looked like and often did not have the skills necessary to provide the "help" their children's school envisioned. This study drew attention to the mismatched concept schools and parents have of what at-home support and learning looks like. Parent-education programs are a way for schools to not only inform parents of the school's expectations, but present parents with the skills to support their children in receiving the at-home help. Parent education programs are now implemented throughout the country. The following three examples discuss how schools and districts have used such programs to inform parents on a range of educational matters.

Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). Chrispeels and Rivero (2001)

examined immigrant parents' changing sense of place in a school when they were given

parent education classes. The assumption was the uncertainty and expectation barriers

described earlier limited parents understanding of their roles. Classes provided by the

Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) addressed the uncertainties by better

preparing parents. PIQE classes resulted in an increased understanding by parents of their

roles in enabling their children to be successful:

> ...parents realized it was not sufficient to just have dreams of a better future for
> their children, but that they had to assume a significant place and role in helping
> realize those dreams. In particular, they understood the relationship among
> literacy activities, homework, and the close monitoring of academic progress as
> essential steps needed for higher education. (p.165)

Literacy training. Parent education programs also address academic goals. St.

Clair and Jackson (2006) followed a cohort of fourteen kindergarten students through

their second grade year. These students' parents went through the Migrant Education

Even Start family literacy program. Students whose parents participated in the parent-

education program scored significantly better in verbal reasoning, letter-word

identification, writing, and the broad score on the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey

literacy assessment.

While the results are noteworthy, but not surprising, what is important from the

success of this parent-education program is its comprehensive implementation. First the

training was well linked with the school's literacy curriculum and parents received

learning aids to use at home with their child. With this direct assistance, parents could be

successful in their support of the at-home learning. Second, the parent-education program

was linked with an adult literacy program, establishing literacy benefits for both the

children and parents. Thus, parents had a meaningful connection to the training because they also received benefits. This case is a good example of how parent-education programs can be supportive, meaningful, and ultimately successful.

Mega-Skills curriculum. While parent-education programs can focus on informing parents of expectations, etc., as the PIQE program did, other schools have used parent-education programs to teach parents about the school's curriculum. The Lyford school district in Texas, which served a 95% Hispanic and 80% low socio-economic status level student population, created a partnership between the school staff, students, and parents centered around the school's use of the Mega-Skills curriculum. The curriculum was implemented between the school and parents and differed from others because of its focus is on social and emotional goals and skills, rather than academic. The Mega-Skills curriculum's components are confidence, motivation, effort, responsibility, perseverance, caring, initiative, teamwork, problem solving, common sense, and focus. The use of this curriculum allowed all parities involved to use a common language amongst its stakeholders (Chavkin, Gonzalez, & Radar, 2000).

Chavkin, Gonzalez, & Radar (2000) found students of participating parents had increased academic and behavior scores. Parents not only saw the success of the curriculum with their children, but also benefited from the implementation of this curriculum. Attendance at parent workshops in the elementary workshops doubled, as well as parent attendance of open houses. In addition, after participation in the Mega-Skills training sessions, some parents went onto become PTO leaders. This curriculum addressed attitudinal barriers because parents were treated as partners and thus increased confidence about becoming involved. This district-wide family involvement parent-

education program not only improved children's educational experiences, but also empowered parents in the process.

As shown from the three examples, schools can successfully implement parent-education classes, targeted at families of ELLs, to serve numerous purposes. In addition, education programs have expanded to educate teachers on working effectively with families of ELLs. For example, the Sheltered Instruction and Family Involvement (SIFI) project trained teachers in explicit strategies for engaging ELL families. Teacher-education programs like these result in an increased understanding by teachers of family involvement and family background thus fostering more engaging and motivating educational experiences for the ELL students (Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008). When schools adopt education programs for both teachers and parents, it allows for multiple viewpoints to be shared, learned, and understood.

Dialogue. JoBeth Allen's 2007 book, *Creating Welcoming Schools: A Practical Guide to Home-School Partnership with Diverse Families*, explains how cultural memoirs, photography, and student-led conferences encourage dialogue among families, teachers, students, and schools. However, Carrèón, Drake, & Barton's 2005 ethnographic study on immigrant parents' school experiences showed an important component to engaging parents is dialogue between parents and schools. One way to encourage this dialogue is by "allowing parents' life experiences and cultural capital to inform schools' cultural worlds" (p.494). Without this incorporation of parents' voices, engagement programs will not bridge the gap between the parents' and the school's world.

Parents Write Their Worlds (PWTW), created through the University of Illinois at Chicago's School of Education, worked with parents whose children attended a small,

elementary school in a poor, predominantly Mexican neighborhood. PWTW promoted the sharing of student voices. It targeted family and parent members in the Chicago area from low socio-economic or immigrant backgrounds. Parents met weekly in their children's schools for a writing workshop focused on personal narratives. While the workshop was held in the elementary school, the Community Writing Project, an outside organization, led the workshop and the children did not participate in the writing workshop. Parents then published their work in a journal, *Real Conditions,* and shared their writing in various forums from their children's classrooms to other community events. The purpose of the study was to: examine the workshop's impact on the parents; how the workshop impacted the teachers and students within the particular school; and the influence of the workshop on the "sociocultural construction of parents and parent involvement" (Hurtig, 2004, no page) within the particular community. Parents Write Their Worlds attempted to increase the community's understanding and interest in the participants' backgrounds. Teachers benefited from this program because they were able to learn more about their students' backgrounds when parents shared their personal narratives.

Family ownership and empowerment. In order to stay involved, families must feel they are getting something out of their investment. This element is often overlooked in family involvement strategies because school leadership determines topics for parent information sessions. With school ownership of family involvement, schools risk losing Hispanic family involvement because their needs and concerns are not directly addressed (Sosa, 1997). Power sharing is a non-conventional way to attend to families' needs and concerns (Delgado-Gaitan,1991). Conventional parent-involvement activities, Delgado-

Gaitan describes, center on administrator control because they determine session topics in an attempt to make parents conform to school norms. Non-conventional methods, though, distribute power so families do not adjust to what school leadership determines is important. Power sharing from a bilingual preschool program included letting parents decide topics for monthly meetings and establishing parents' roles as co-teachers by explaining the curriculum and extension activities to them (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). The Committee for Latin Parents, or COPLA, is an example of parents having complete control, because they formed their own support group with a teacher serving as an advisor between parents and the school. COPLA's goal was by sharing personal experiences about the school system with one another, parents assist one another (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). In both examples, parents were more engaged because they were involved in the process and their concerns were being addressed; therefore, it was worth their investment.

Empowering families through ownership allows for many facets of trust to be established because families of ELLs are seen and treated as partners. Sharing power makes administrators aware of parents' actual goals and concerns, rather than perceived ones (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). School leadership is then more informed for effective decision-making because their constituents have been heard and acknowledged.

Cultural brokers within the school. Many of the programs discussed above and writing programs described in Question 2 highlight the need for communication to address misunderstandings and differences in expectations. Cultural brokers can serve this role. Schools provide translators who translate the words being spoken between two parties, yet their purpose is to translate the words, not the values or address confusions or

misunderstandings. While bilingual coordinators or PTA presidents serve as liaisons between the school and parents, a cultural broker is more effective. Cultural brokers are essential because they serve as cultural translators: "Someone who knows the rough parts of the road for an immigrant can facilitate the appropriate knowledge and means that will allow people to participate more fully in their new community" (Delgado-Gaitan, 2006, p.16). The Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) example described earlier used cultural brokers as their parent-education class instructors. The PIQE instructors had extensive experience in the Latino community and were key element to PIQE's success. Parents could learn strategies for interacting with teachers and school administrators from people who were from the Hispanic community. Whereas bilingual coordinators may serve the role of a liaison between the administration and parents, they ultimately represent the school's views and ideals. Cultural brokers, specifically address the parent-generated concerns.

The rationale for cultural brokers relates directly back to the attitudinal and expectations barriers. The majority of the described barriers are not fully understood by school staff because they are specific to Hispanics and personal in nature. However, they significantly impact families' decisions whether or not to be involved. A cultural broker would be able to directly address the barriers, both with parents and the administration, thus allowing for more open communication.

Family literacy. Family literacy (Taylor, 1983) acknowledges the role parents play as the first teachers in their child's literacy, or reading and writing, growth. Many parental involvement programs, while addressing literacy instruction, typically focus on the at-home reading connection. Meier's (2000) work on parents' involvement in literacy

education, for example, involved creating book bag programs and workshops focused on read-alouds, extension activities through art and science, and read-aloud strategies. The number of school programs that address writing's fundamentals is significantly less. For example, Charlottesville, Virginia city public schools hosted its first annual Parent University in winter 2009. The four-hour Saturday workshop provided parents with a choice of sessions they could attend. Workshop topics covered homework help, positive discipline, reading, and math topics; no sessions covered writing support. Parents, though, can be great models for students' writing development because children emulate what they see around them (Graves & Stuart, 1985). The following sections describe school or classroom programs that encourage and support parent-child writing development.

Family Write Night. Write Night was a family involvement project established by a preschool, kindergarten, and first grade teacher at a small elementary school in Missouri. Two professors, Julie Albee and Margaret Drew, conducted a study (2000) of the goals and outcomes of this project. Each grade level met three times a year to participate in the workshop with each night's intended outcome being to write and publish a different type of book to take home and add to their family library. All three teachers facilitated the sessions together. During each session, families were assigned a different station where they worked on various types of books. Stations included: alphabet books, creating books on the computer, and "All About Me" books using photographs they brought in. At the end of the writing, each child's book was photocopied twice and then laminated. One copy went home with the child; the other went in the child's classroom library.

Write Night was established through an outside grant with the goal of having 85%
participation during at least two of the three nights. However, if parent work schedules
did not allow or there was an absence due to sickness, etc. the teachers either arranged a
time during the day or the family came to another grade's workshop night. This
flexibility resulted in 100% attendance for all grade levels during the first two years of
the program (Albee & Drew, 2000). Families received notification of the program
through a written note that included all of the sessions' dates. Reminder notes were also
sent home before the workshop, in addition to teachers wearing "Write Night" t-shirts to
school on the day of the session.

All parties involved benefited from Write Night. First, parents and teachers
commented on the amount of uninterrupted and undivided time family members had to
devote to their child. This time allowed for a two-way dialogue about the book making
process and teachable moments amongst family members on computer use (Albee &
Drew, 2000). Second, the reading and writing processes were unfamiliar to many parents,
thus having teachers model how to assist their children was beneficial for parents. Third,
participants were able to create a tangible product with each workshop that they could
continually share and read at their home. Finally, it provided the facilitating teachers an
additional opportunity for professional development because it increased their time spent
doing vertical collaboration.

Write Night provides two important lessons to apply to other family involvement
programs. First, parents were collaborators in their child's learning, but together with
their child, they were decision-makers in what and how to write. This became an
empowering process for parents because they learned how to support their child, guided

by the teachers' facilitation. Second, Write Night provided participating families with a concrete product for them to take home and support literacy at home.

Family message journals. Family journals are a way to promote continual, daily writing between family members and their children. Wollman-Bonilla (2000, 2001) conducted a study with first graders using family message journals to communicate with families. Students wrote each day about what they did in relation to the curriculum and sometimes students would include various announcements (e.g., field trips, school events, or school supplies). The family-message journals constituted the majority of students' class writing instruction and time. Journals were then brought home and any adult in the home could write a response. No directions were given for the type of response and it was emphasized to families that content or grammar was not important. Rather, the family feedback was the priority because it acknowledged and encouraged the young child's writing.

Wollman-Bonilla (2000, 2001) found family members, regardless of educational or socio-economic backgrounds, were able to use the message journals to model and scaffold their child's literacy learning. For example, parents' responses modeled a variety of genres to their children, such as narrative, informational, and poetic text structures. Family message journals encouraged all types of literacy contributions from families, even if they did not align with the school's more mainstream expectations (Wollman-Bonilla, 2001). This is important because difference in expectations is a barrier to parental involvement. When all types of responses are encouraged, as in the family message journals, it reinforces the belief all parents do care and can be involved in their child's academic success.

While this study examined journals as a type of family involvement to extend authentic learning, there were limitations. The study did not examine families writing together, the participants were middle-class families, and only one of the four families had English language learners. However, family message journals could be a useful and meaningful way to engage ELL families because they encourage diversity in responses, without an expected norm-response. In addition, the journals could be used to develop more open lines of communication between family members and teachers and allow for cultural sharing between the two parties.

Joint writing homework. Similar to the family message journals, Barillas (2000) used collaborative at-home writing assignments to engage her sixth-grade students and their parents in the writing process. Three times a year, families were sent home an assigned prompt and were given two weeks to each write a response and share it with one another. Writing prompts included giving advice, poems, and responses to current events, such as Nobel Peace Prizes. The responses were submitted back to the teacher for a class publication and each student was given a copy.

Barillas (2000) found this a successful way of engaging parents in two main ways. First, these writing assignments created discussions about literacy within students' homes because families wrote together and students received take home copies of the publication. Second, these conversations and writing samples encouraged the diversity within the classroom. Since writing responses were accepted in any language, it accepted the language backgrounds represented in the classroom. Writing responses were only edited, never revised, thus valuing families' ideas. Joint writing homework is a practical example for other classrooms to adopt because it engages parents of all language and

literacy backgrounds and levels. Moreover, parents are enabled to support their child's learning.

Cultural writing. The following parent-student writing programs also advance family literacy, and value the diversity in today's classrooms and families.

Telling stories. Various experiences that develop children's writing skills begin before children know how to write a single letter. Story-telling is one such practice, but not typically done in schools. The week-long Parent Institute, established by four professors at the University of Texas at San-Antonio, was created for family members of local three and four-year olds (Riojas-Cortez, Flores, Smith, & Clark, 2003). The majority of the participants were Mexican-American, but area teachers and university staff also attended. The institute's goal was to teach participants how to use the cultural family practice of story-telling to promote young children's literacy development. During the story-telling, family members were taught about a story's elements and then instructed to think of a story to tell their child(ren) about anything. Props, such as stuffed animals, were used as story ideas. Families told their stories in whatever language they felt more proficient in—Spanish or English—or sometimes both. Providing a language option allowed participants to create well-developed and creative stories. By using their own language and cultural background, family members and students make deep connections.

The Parent Institute valued both the language and cultural diversity of its participants. This is meaningful because it allowed participants to improve their child's literacy skills while using their own language and cultural values; participants did not have to conform to mainstream language or cultural values in order to be successful.

Future Directions

The previously described programs address other levels of family involvement on Epstein's (1995, 2002) framework, beyond the Type 1 Parenting level. While these programs lay a good framework for establishing future programs for engaging families in the writing process, many gaps need to be addressed in future program development, specifically as they relate to my study's population. First, programs should address Epstein's Type 4 Parenting level of learning at home in order to empower families as their child's first teachers. The experiences and the modeling they provide impacts children's formative years (Clay, 1975; Graves & Stuart, 1985). Second, family involvement programs should be geared towards early childhood children because they decrease the chance of later grade retention and leads to higher academic achievement (Marcon, 1993). Third, family involvement programs aimed at the ELL population can allow for true dialogue (Freire, 1970) and interaction among the family, child, and teacher about what is being learned.

One example to learn from is Compton-Lilly's (2003) work with family literacy involvement. Her urban first graders' parents' understanding about reading showed parents construct meaning of what reading is in a variety of ways, based on individual and family experiences, cultural practices, and the contexts in which they live (p. 137). Often, these notions contrast with more mainstream assumptions of what reading is and thus lead to confusion between the mainstream educational system and the parents. She argues that these "other" factors must be validated when considering urban students and families' concepts about reading.

While her study focused on the reading aspect of literacy, her results can be applied to writing: families develop the concept of what writing is and its purposes in a variety of ways. These ways are all important and it is important these differences are celebrated and acknowledged both within the writing and school community. The writing field is one that encourages diversity and other cultural aspects, such as story-telling, to be drawn upon. Arthur Kelly, former Las Vegas middle school teacher, recognized the importance of family and writing when he founded the Family Writing Project in 2001. It brings together families, students, and teachers as writers in family scribe groups. Since its relatively new founding, the Family Writing Project has sites in five locations throughout the country.

While the Family Writing Project is similar to my family writing workshop, my study differed in two ways. First, my study's family writing workshop focused on early-childhood ELLs, whereas participants in the Family Writing Project come from all backgrounds. As highlighted in the research, more ELL specific family involvement programs are needed. Since the oral language needs of young ELL students are increased because of their varying amounts of English language exposure, a writing workshop in which story telling and talking is encouraged could be beneficial to developing English skills and story structure.

Second, my study's family writing workshop did not have a scripted structure. Whereas the Family Writing Project suggests pre-written lessons and activities, I based mine on research in the writing field, as shown above supports instruction based on the particular writers' need, not on pre-written lessons.

My study addressed identified gaps in the research in family involvement programs to examine families and young, ELL children as writers together. I learned how parents and their children worked together in a writing workshop context, but more importantly, how lessons learned from this workshop could be applied to future involvement programs. I collected data in a family writing workshop and answered the following questions.

My Research Questions

My study was guided by the following questions:

- What were the experiences of ELL families in a summer writing workshop?

- What did I do as the facilitator that enabled family members to feel successful?

The next chapter describes in detail the methodology I used to answer these questions.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore family involvement in school settings, particularly as it pertains to ELL students and their families. To examine this, I conducted a writing workshop for area early childhood (preK-2) ELLs and their families. The workshop met for three nights a week, for three consecutive weeks during the summer. This chapter outlines the qualitative interpretivist research design I used when I examined the following questions:

- What were the experiences of ELL families in a summer writing workshop?

- What did I do as a facilitator that enabled family members to feel successful?

Rationale for Qualitative Design

Maxwell (2005) states qualitative research can help achieve goals that seek to understand meaning for participants, a particular context, and a process. My study is well suited to a qualitative design since my study's purpose was to understand the family involvement phenomenon as it pertains to English language learners.

Interpretivism

I worked from an interpretive paradigm to better understand the complex, multiple realities families have within the family involvement context. Erickson (1986) establishes the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions that guide the researcher within an interpretive paradigm. Ontologically speaking the researcher assumes there are multiple realities that are complex and contextual. Meaning and reality are constructed differently by each meaning-maker; each reality is locally constructed. Therefore, as a researcher it was important for me to infer how each family member was making-meaning as a writer or education partner within the workshop context.

Erickson's methodological assumptions are that all research methods are fallible so the researcher must use multiple methods. To address this, I triangulated my data findings through field note observations, conferences, document collection, and interviews. In addition, the researcher is an instrument. The researcher cannot be separated from the other research instruments. Participants are essential for establishing truth and reality and therefore the researcher's participant observer role is critical to interpretive research because it gets at the participants' meaning perspectives. These meaning perspectives are important because participants' meanings may vary from my own. More description of my research strategy and my role as the researcher is given in the following Methods section.

In the interpretivist paradigm, the epistemological beliefs come from a subjectivist perspective: knowledge is limited to that particular meaning-maker or group. To gain this meaning making within the workshop context, I assumed a facilitator-observer role. Since the researcher is an instrument (Erickson, 1986), the researcher

cannot be separated from other research instruments. Participants are essential for establishing truth and reality and therefore the researcher's participant observer role is critical to interpretive research.

Research Strategy

I used Erickson's (1986) model of analytic induction. Mainly through induction, I generated a set of connected empirical assertions and established a warrant for each of the assertions. The goal was to provide an interpretation about the particular phenomenon being studied: ELL family involvement. I will discuss the steps of this process in greater detail in the data analysis section of this chapter.

Methods

The following section describes the methods used for site and sample collection; researcher role and access; and data collection methods. There is also a brief discussion on the methods used for data analysis and validity criteria.

Site and sample. My research area and study questions limited the scope of my population to a specific population: rising PreK-2, ELL students. To find potential participants, I used both criterion and snowball or chain sampling (Patton, 1990). Initially, I assumed I would be able to find four families within the county elementary school, Garrison, (a pseudonym) I worked in for the past year-and-a-half. This school had the largest elementary ELL population in the county and my experience there was with the lower-elementary students. In May 2009, I distributed flyers in both Spanish and English to students in the desired criterion at Garrison elementary, using both the K-1 ESOL teacher and kindergarten teacher I worked with to identify potentially interested

kindergarten and first grade families. The ESOL teacher also gave me contact information for four additional first grade families.

Two weeks later, I needed to cast a larger recruitment net, because I only had three participating families. One family confirmed through a phone contact and two of the original fifteen families returned the flyer. Adding to the complication, when I attempted to confirm participation of one of the families that had returned the flyer, the phone number and address provided were no longer current. Thus, they were never contacted and did not attend the workshop. One additional family, recruited through a university professor, was also interested in the workshop. After a home visit, this family agreed to the participation in the workshop. This brought my total to three confirmed families; I needed more families. I revised my sampling process, as shown in Figure 3-1.
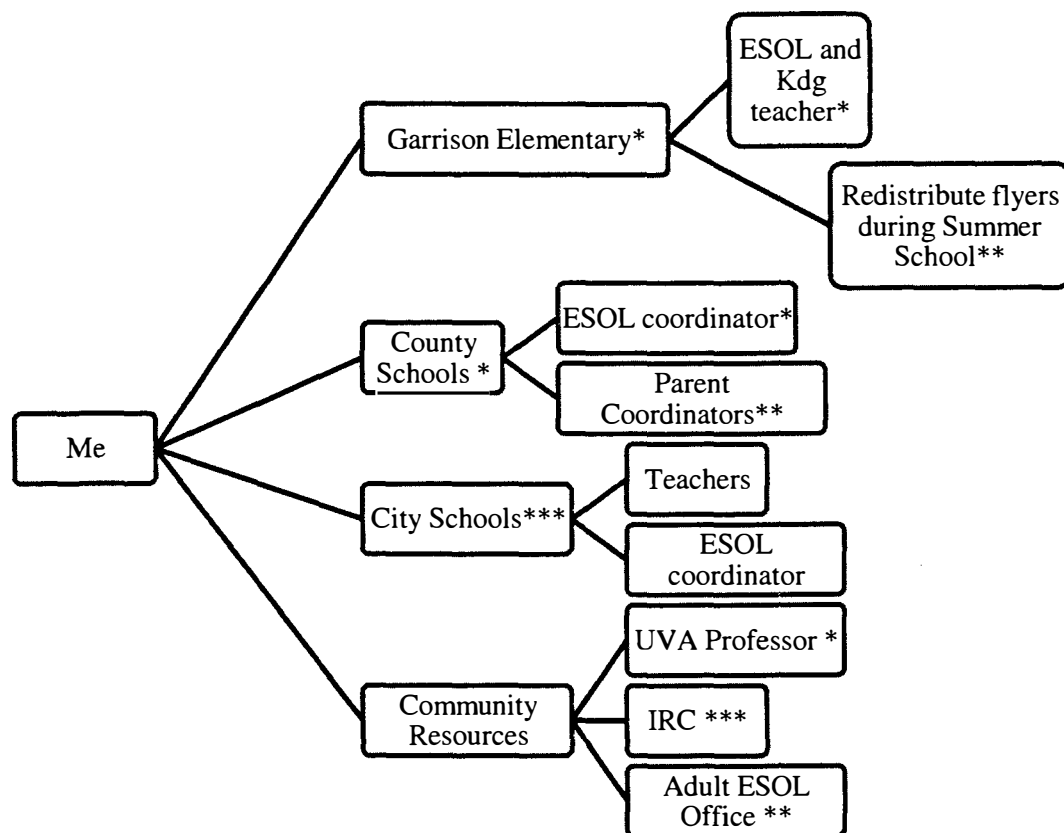
Figure 3-1. Sampling Plan

* = Original contact.

**= Revised Sampling Plan where I had a contact at the organization.

***= Revised Sampling Plan where I did not have a contact the organization.

In my revised sampling plan I increased additional community partners'

awareness of the workshop. Due to various logistics and legal procedures, the majority of

my contacts to other organizations did not produce any interested contacts. Some families

were out of the country for the summer. Other families had evening jobs or medical care

that prevented them from participating. The early childhood parent coordinators at the

county schools, each with personal connections to the families, were able to contact and

put me in touch with two additional families resulting in five total families. One family

withdrew, though, because the mother, who was planning on attending the workshop with

her son, was placed on pregnancy bed rest. Therefore, four families were present at the first day of the workshop. On the workshop's third day, another family surprisingly came to the workshop. They heard about the workshop through their cousins, who were one of the participating families. This brought my total to five families. Overall, I gave fliers to approximately 30 students, 2 school district English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) coordinators, 10 teachers, and 2 community organizations; made personal phone calls to 10 families; conducted 3 home visits; and had a parent coordinator make 3 additional home visits. Description of the workshop participants is given below.

The workshop site. This workshop occurred in a diverse, medium-size Virginia city/county. This particular city is unique because it has a large ESOL population. It is an International Refugee Committee (IRC) relocation site for many various ethnic groups from different parts of the world. Additionally, there is a large Hispanic population in the area. Children and family members from both the city and county schools were invited to participate. The total preK-12 student population in both the city and county is approximately 16,375 students.

The particular site, a classroom at a county middle school, was chosen because of access and logistics. The majority of initial invited families attend the neighboring elementary school. Since the elementary school was not open during the summer due to construction, it was recommended by the elementary school assistant principal I host the workshop at the near-by middle school. This middle school was also the location for the elementary summer school, which I was the principal of. During our planning meeting, the middle school principal willingly agreed to let me use classroom space to host the workshop. I chose a room in which the elementary school would be using over the

summer, so the furniture would be appropriate for young children. Therefore, the school's close proximity to potential participants, no-cost for use of space, and appropriate sized furniture made this an excellent choice.

The workshop facilitator. As mentioned earlier, I served as the workshop facilitator. I drew upon my experience as a first-grade teacher of Hispanic ELL students, relevant and recent research, and input from a writing professor when designing the outline and structure of the workshop. During each workshop, I facilitated the start of each session, led a mini-lesson, conferred with children writers, and observed how families interacted while writing together.

After advice from an early childhood parent coordinator in the county's school system, I hired a Spanish translator to come to each workshop. She learned from her experience hosting family workshops, having a translator allowed Spanish-speaking families to fully participate because they had more direct access to information and were able to ask questions. The translator, an American who had been born in Central America, had worked closely with the county school system in their parent outreach programs. Therefore, she was familiar with family and child interactions, as well as the school system. While she was not a facilitator in the sense I was, she was a facilitator in that she allowed for all members of the workshop to fully participate. During each workshop, Jane (a pseudonym) translated directions and mini-lessons for the Spanish speaking family members. She also translated conversations and questions between the Spanish-speaking family members and myself during various parts of the workshop. In addition to oral translation, she kept running records in a notebook of the interactions

between the Spanish-speaking family members and their children as they wrote, since they mainly occurred in Spanish.

The workshop participants. Five families participated in this workshop. I learned about the families' backgrounds through a brief questionnaire (See Appendix B), conversations during the workshop, and during formal interviews. It should be noted even though I informed families the questionnaire would be used for my own purposes of the study, two families did ask specifically who would see the paper copies because of immigration issues.

To protect the privacy of both the parent and children participants, all participants were given pseudonyms. I provided confidentiality by keeping this list of pseudonyms in a locked file safe, as well as any other important information, such as the questionnaires. Table 3-1 provides a brief overview description of the family participants. Please note the length of time in the United States and the children's ages are listed as they were during the workshop.

	Jackson Family	Dono Family	Torres Family	Dominguez Family	Galache Family
Native Country	Liberia	Ghana	Mexico	Mexico	Columbia
Length of Time in the United States	2 years	6 years	4 years	5 years	1 year
Primary Home Language	English	Twi & English	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish (some English)
Child(ren)'s Gender and Age	Girl, Rising 3rd; Girl, Rising 1st	Boy, Rising 2nd; Girl, Rising K	Girl, Rising 1st; Girl, Rising PreK	Boy, Rising K; Boy, 18 months	Boy, Rising 1st; Girl, Rising PreK
Low SES	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes	No

Table 3-1. Family Participants

The Jackson family. The Jackson family, originally from Liberia, had lived in the United States for two years. The parents and the daughters were born in Liberia. However, their son, Momo, approximately 18 months old, was born in the United States. Korlu, a rising 3rd grader, and Miatta, a rising 1st grader, attended the workshop each evening. This family found out about the workshop through a university professor, Mindy Sansen that knows the family well. Once she spoke to Mrs. Jackson about the workshop, I made a home visit to confirm their participation and work out transportation logistics. While I provided transportation each night to the Jackson family, Mrs. Jackson did not start coming until the last week of the workshop. When she attended, she also brought Momo, and sat solely with Miatta during the workshop. She did not encourage or tell Momo to sit down and draw something.

The Dono family. The Dono family, originally from Ghana, lived in the United States for six years. Only the parents and the oldest boy, Richard, were born in Ghana. The family consisted of three children: Richard (rising 2nd grader); Victoria (rising kindergartner); and Theresa (16 months). Both English and Twi were spoken in the home. Richard and Victoria attended Garrison Elementary, where I knew Richard previously from work with his ESOL teacher. They found out about the workshop because of a phone call I made to the family home. Then, the early childhood parent coordinator also made a home visit to confirm their participation.

Mrs. Dono never came to the workshop or the publishing party. Instead, Mr. Dono brought Richard and Victoria each night. Of the nine evening workshops, he stayed for three entire workshops. On the rest of the evenings, including the publishing party, he

would drop them off and then come approximately fifteen minutes before the finish to see what his children had written.

The Torres family. The Torres family lived in the United States for the past five years. The parents were originally from Mexico, where the oldest daughter, Michelle, a rising first grader, was born. Mr. and Mrs. Torres had two other daughters: Andrea, 3 years old, and Claritza, approximately 18 months old. For the majority of the previous school year, Michelle was in the classroom where I was a researcher. She transferred to a new school approximately two-thirds through the school year. Two family coordinators for the county schools and a translator helped me contact Michelle's family. Then, once contact was established, I did a home visit to formally invite the family.

Mrs. Torres attended the workshop each night with Michelle and Andrea. I arranged for a taxi-cab to take the family to the workshop and then Mr. Torres picked them up when he finished work. When her husband was working late, Claritza also attended. Even though Michelle was her only child to sit down on her own accord and write each night, Mrs. Torres had her two younger daughters, Andrea and Claritza, also sit down and try to write something.

The Dominguez family. The Dominguez family lived in the United States for the past four years. The parents were originally from Mexico, but the children were born in the United States. Justin was a rising kindergartner and attended a prekindergarten program in the city schools. Kenny was approximately 18 months old and went to the majority of the workshops. He mainly walked around the room and played with various toys that were set out for the youngest children, but for a few minutes each night Mrs. Dominguez would place him next to her and had him draw with markers. Mrs.

Dominguez attended each workshop with her sons and once or twice a week, Mr. Dominguez also attended. The Dominguez family found out about the workshop because Mr. Dominguez and Mrs. Torres were brother and sister.

The Galache family. The Galache family was from Columbia, but lived in the United States for the past year while Mr. Galache attended business school at a local university. Mrs. Galache had extended family living in the United States. The Galache family consisted of two parents and two children: Adalbert (rising 1st) and Alicia (rising pre-kindergarten). While the entire family spoke both Spanish and English, Spanish was the main language spoken and written in the home. Adalbert attended Garrison Elementary and was in the classroom where I was researcher the previous year. They agreed to do the workshop after I sent home a flyer. Mrs. Galache attended the workshop each night and worked with both of her children, though most of her time was spent with Alicia. On the night of the publishing party, Mr. Galache also attended.

The workshop context. Each evening workshop lasted for seventy-five minutes in order to provide children with multiple writing experiences. The family writing workshop followed a traditional writing workshop (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001) structure with a mini-lesson, family writing time, and group sharing. To clarify, instead of an independent writing time, as in a traditional writing workshop, the time was designated as family writing because children and their parents wrote together. A "Say Hello" time at the start of the workshop and "Snack Time" towards the end of the workshop were also included since family participants did not know each other. These social opportunities provided opportunities for open dialogue (Carrèón, G.P., Drake, C., & Barton, A.C., 2005). The space for open dialogue was important because parent and child family members used the

time as they saw fit. Many chose this time to socialize with one another or to continue

writing.

  The workshop environment. The workshop environment served two purposes.

First, it supported the children's ability to operate independently. Space was designed for

whole group sharing, individual sharing, and family writing areas. A supply shelf kept all

writing materials within children's reach because writing environments should support

what writers can do (Ray & Glover, 2008). Since the children's ages spanned from two

years old to eight years old, fine motor skills were across the continuum, the supplies I

provided were differentiated according to development level and interest. For example,

rather than using lined composition notebooks, white copy paper was used. I stapled and

folded the paper in various ways to mirror books we had read, but a stapler and loose

sheets of copy paper were on the supply shelf for writers to create their own book format.

I also set out a variety of coloring and writing materials to accommodate various interests

and different hand sizes. Figure 3-2 is a layout of the workshop space.
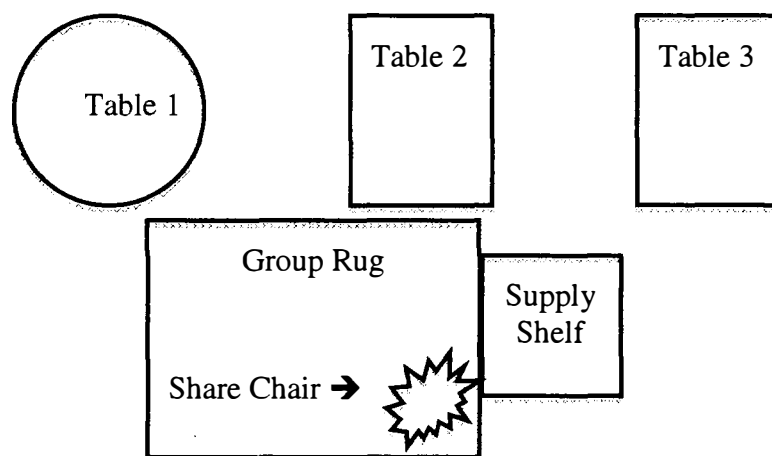
Figure 3-2. Workshop Space

Second, I provided the children with a literacy-rich environment. I read books, but also pointed out various book features and elements to the children, such as font styles, placement of illustrations, etc. I also placed out a book basket so children could look at books if they needed to get ideas. Moreover, daily discussions on authors' crafts occurred during read-alouds and the sharing of children's writing increase awareness of the various conventions and techniques writers applied to their books.

Mini-lesson. The mini-lesson occurred at the start of the workshop, ranging in length from ten to twenty minutes. In the mini-lesson, I introduced and modeled the particular evening's writing objective, via a read-aloud or in my own oral or written story. Children sat with me on the group rug and parents sat around the rug at tables listening. Oral stories served as the focus for most mini-lessons for two reasons. First, story-telling is a culturally relevant practice for many ethnic groups. Second, story-telling is a natural place for tapping into children's writing readiness because children enter classrooms telling about things that happened to them (Horn & Giacobbe, 2007). These oral stories were used to transfer concepts about stories to written stories. The mini-lesson portion provided direct modeling on how oral stories can be recorded as written stories. Since writers get ideas from various places and doing different things, research (Horn & Giacobbe, 2007; Tunks & Giles, 2007) recommends using an assortment of props or strategies for telling oral stories. In this workshop, puppets, pictures, and personal objects were used as starting places for children to tell stories.

When mini-lesson objectives focused on spelling strategies, I invited parents to sit next to their child on the rug so they could see and model directly how to use the strategy.

Mini-lesson objectives were derived from research on early childhood writing, the participants' writing, and parents' needs. Mini-lessons were primarily done whole group, but sometimes mini-lessons were done in small groups depending on the participants' needs. During this part of the workshop I assumed a facilitator role. Appendix C shows my final workshop plan.

Writing time. Following the mini-lesson, children had approximately thirty to forty minutes for writing. Children selected a writing spot in the classroom and then decided what to write about. By making choices about their writing, children carried out their communicative work, thus making the writing authentic (Lindfors, 2008). During this portion, I assumed a participant-observer role by conferring with the children and observing what families said and did as they wrote together.

Sharing. The last ten to fifteen minutes were reserved for children to share. Children had the option of choosing something they wrote or drew. However, if a child did not want to share, s/he was not required to. After a child was done sharing, the other children offered compliments to the writer or asked questions about the child's writing. When there were no more compliments or questions, the child designated the next writer to share. Once children knew the share routine, I assumed mainly an observer role during this portion of the workshop.

Publishing party. The writing workshop concluded with a publishing party on the last day. Families were informed since the first day one of the workshop's purposes was to write a real book to take home and keep. Children selected a piece they had written over the course of the workshop to publish. Together, parents and children finished

writing this piece, used various art materials to illustrate pictures, and created a title and cover. Then, I collected all of the books and had them laminated and spiral bound.

On the last day, additional family members and teachers were invited to come the publishing party. Each child then shared his or her book. Children selected what they would share, shared it, and then took comments or questions from the audience. At the end, each child's book was applauded and each received a writing certificate.

Access. Getting workshop participants proved to the greatest complication with the workshop implementation. Snowballing was essential to gaining access to potential workshop participants. All of my contacts had established personal connections with each of the families. My contacts ranged in position from a university professor, county school teachers and parent coordinators, and family members of already participating participants.

To fully implement this workshop, financial resources were secured through a grant obtained by the University of Virginia's Center for Children, Family, and the Law. This grant allowed me to mainly pay for translator costs and taxi-cab fees, used for transporting families to the workshop, as well as workshop supplies and children's book publication costs.

Permission was gained from the children and adult family members through signed consent forms (See Appendix D). At the first workshop, each adult family member was given a written description of the study and then was orally informed of my role during the workshop. In addition, family members were informed of the kind of data I would be collecting during and after the workshop (observations, conferences, and

interviews). For Spanish-speaking families, the translator went through the consent forms and discussed their and my involvement in the study, as well as my role as a researcher.

Data collection. From June 2009 to August 2009, I collected four primary sources of data: 1) workshop observations; 2) writing conferences; 3) writing samples; and 4) family member interviews. Multiple data sources were used throughout the study since research methods are fallible (Erickson, 1986).

Workshop observations. Family member (both parents and children) observations were collected on each day of the family writing workshop: three days a week, for three weeks. Observations were used as the main method of data collection because observing writers is one of the best ways to learn about them (Calkins, 1986/1994). Running records documented what families did and said during the workshop. My role's responsibilities fluctuated throughout the duration of the workshop, so I also documented my words and actions. Observational notes were recorded in a field notebook. A field notebook was used, in lieu of a laptop, because I wanted my presence at the writing tables to be as minimal of a distraction as possible. I struggled with recording participants' responses exactly as how and in the order they were said, especially when family members were busy with conversation. Since language interactions were essential to me, I used a small digital tape recorder while observing and conferring. After the workshop I typed the running record, from both the field notebook and tape recorder, and added in any additional analytical or methodological notes.

Writing conferences. I conducted writing conferences (Calkins, Hartman, & White, 2005) with the children participants during independent writing to examine what families were writing about and the processes they were engaging in. Conferences ranged

in length from two to three minutes to ten minutes. Conference notes were hand-written in the field notebook as part of the running record.

During the first week of the workshop, no formal conference schedule was made. Rather, I ensured I met with each child during the independent writing time. This allowed me to be flexible as I learned about the child as a writer and how each family wrote together. Formal conference schedules were set during the second week of the workshop. These schedules were made the previous night after I had read over and reflected on the child's writing from that night's session. Then, after our mini-lesson, I shared with the children the conference schedule for that evening. Even though there was a formal conference schedule, each writer was still met with daily.

Writing collection. During the each week, children and family members wrote on individual pieces of paper or blank books that were kept in writing folders. The children composed these writing pieces by using a combination of letters, letter-like shapes, pictures, and/or words. The children's different writing pieces also varied in length, sometimes being a single page, whereas other pieces were fourteen pages long. Over the weekends, children took home journals, which they wrote. Each of the children's writings were collected and photocopied after each workshop. On a post-it or on the photocopied writing piece, I added information that could not be inferred without knowledge of what the child had told me about the writing piece. For example, children's invented spelling and pictures sometimes were difficult to interpret without their assistance. In these situations, I recorded onto the photocopy what the child said to describe his or her writing. Jane translated children's writing that had been done in Spanish. Children's

writings were also scanned and saved as a jpeg. For each child, I have approximately

seven writing pieces, each varying in length.

Interviews. I conducted one formal interview with each family member.

Interviews with the children were conducted during the last week of the workshop. These

lasted approximately five to ten minutes in length and were conducted during the writing

workshop in order to have children's thoughts and perspectives as fresh as possible.

Parent interviews, ranged from fifteen to sixty minutes, and were conducted during the

last week of the workshop and into August, outside of the workshop time frame. Mr.

Dono was the only parent I did not formally interview because I was unable to get in

contact with him after the workshop. These interviews were used to gain an

understanding about what family members gained from the workshop, as well as

suggestions they had. The interview data was used to further support my field notes, as

well as develop assertions. Before conducting the interviews, an interview guide was

prepared and revised with suggestions from a writing professor. (See Appendix E and F

for the protocol.) All interviews were recorded on a digital tape recorder and notes during

the interview were recorded in my field notebook or on the interview sheet. Interview

notes were recorded in my field notebook and then typed up as both a tape script and

transcript.

Analysis of the data. The following section describes my process for data

analysis and my steps for validity criteria. According to Erickson (1986), data analysis

begins at data collection. My conceptual framework informed my data collection and

guided my data analysis, specifically with coding and memoing. While I originally

anticipated drawing more from early childhood writing and language research as separate

components, as I began my data analysis, I situated the research from these two fields in relation to how families interacted within the workshop context. Figure 3-3 shows my revised framework. At the center is the purpose of my study: to document families' interactions experiences within a summer, family writing workshop. I examined how family member experiences from the summer writing workshop were framed from various field theories in early childhood writing (Avery, 2002; Horn & Giacobbe, 2007; Lindfors, 2008; Newkirk, 1989; Ray & Glover, 2008), language use (Freeman & Freeman, 2001; Vygotsky, 1986), and family involvement (Delgado-Gaitán, 1990, 1991, 2001; Epstein, 1995, 2002).
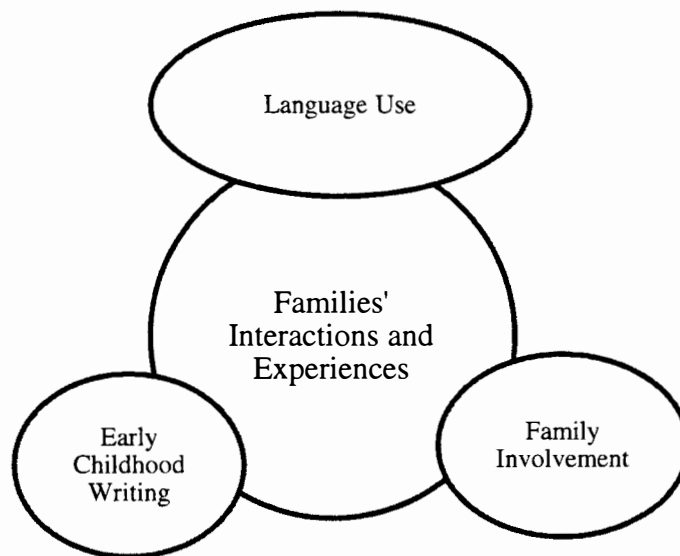
Figure 3-3. Conceptual Framework

Data analysis methods.

Revisiting the data. Since the data were collected over the summer months, the first step in my data analysis was revisiting the data corpus. During the data collection, field note data were organized chronologically by date. Children's writing were

organized in chronologically because it was important to see how the children's writing progressed throughout the workshop. Photocopies of the writing were kept in individual file folders, organized by each child's name. The children's original writing was also color scanned into jpeg files saved under the child's name, as well as date. This detailed organization increased the ease of revisiting the data corpus.

In this revisit, I was surprised by the degree the data for each family varied. While I originally proposed developing assertions based on similarities between families, I realized during this step, I would omit powerful participants' experiences, a concern raised in my dissertation proposal. Thus, I decided to develop assertions for each family. Then from these individual family assertions, I developed broader assertions concerning ELL family involvement and those became my findings.

With this revised analysis process, I reread the data set for each family, coding the data for merging and re-emerging themes pertaining to that particular family. Throughout this data coding, I created an outline for each family of my codes and examples of potential narrative vignettes.

Once this step was finished, I again revisited the data, keeping in mind a suggestion from my dissertation committee: telling the day-by-day story of the workshop. While I like this idea because it emphasized my role as the facilitator and the actual workshop, I was concerned framing the findings day-by-day took away from each family's cohesive story. Therefore, when I reread the data this time, I read and coded for what I did as a facilitator, on a day-by-day basis, to make the workshop a successful

experience for participants. Similar to what I did before, I created an outline of codes and examples of potential narrative vignettes pertaining to my role as a facilitator.

Analytical memos. The next component of my data analysis consisted writing analytical memos from the coded outlines I had created for each family, as well as my role as the facilitator. Erickson's interpretivist approach uses analytic induction in data analysis. In this process, assertions are inductively generated throughout the data collection and then supported by well-developed warrants. My database consisting of field notes, writing samples, and interview transcripts was read frequently and searched for confirming and disconfirming evidence. From the reading of this database, assertions were generated and supported by vignettes, quotes, and student writing. Sharing my memos and feedback from fellow writing researchers allowed for me to verify the strength of my assertions.

Validity criteria. Inadequate amounts of evidence, inadequate variety of kinds of evidence, and inadequate disconfirming evidence are threats to the validity of an interpretive study (Erickson, 1986). Validity is determined by assertions that reflect plausible accounts and patterns across the data, using multiple methods since research methods are fallible, and adequate time in the field so assertions can be properly framed. In order to address these and establish validity, I employed several strategies. First, I gathered a variety of evidence in the form of: field notes, student conferences, document collection, teacher interviews, and student interviews. This allowed me to verify my findings across multiple sources of data. Second, for the reader, when presenting my findings, only excerpts from the data sources were presented that support those findings. Third, as I analyzed the data, I shared my findings and assertions with two audiences: a

peer debriefer, with whom I met weekly, and a writing research team. This was my second year as a member of this research team, which consisted of seven other individuals, including a university professor, other doctoral students, and teachers. Members of this research team provided me with feedback on my data findings. Finally, only assertions that accounted for confirming and disconfirming evidence were accepted.

Researcher as an instrument. Two items stood out as my role as a researcher as an instrument. First, were my conceptions about family involvement. Erickson (1986) states the researcher must be aware of his/her own assumptions of what is being studied. As presented in Chapter 4, families' actions contrasted greatly in the workshop; sometimes parents did not attend the workshop. At the conclusion of the workshop, since I was both the researcher and workshop facilitator, I felt some parents were not involved. While I initially thought I was aware of my own beliefs when the workshop began, I realized when revisiting my data I was judging parents' involvement, attendance, and actions according to my own. Taking time to separate myself from the data and then revisiting it allowed me to become aware of the assumptions in which I was reading and analyzing my data. In addition, using multiple sources of data was useful with this because as a researcher I could look at the particular family's experience from an entire data set, rather than my facilitator's lens, which were more influenced by isolated events.

The second area that impacted my role as the researcher was my involvement with the workshop as its facilitator. It was difficult to remove myself from the data analysis because I was a key component in the actual workshop. While Chapter 5 discusses my findings pertaining to my role as a facilitator, it is also my attempt to give more discussion as to what guided my decisions as the facilitator. An awareness of my

role as the researcher guided my data analysis in order to keep my findings as accurate to the participants' meanings as possible.

CHAPTER 4

Findings Pertaining to the Involvement of the Particular ELL Families

The findings of this chapter are presented by telling the stories and experiences of

each family during the workshop. The families' stories are told by presenting a

combination of narrative vignettes, writing samples, and interviews. The beginning

vignette(s) describe experiences pertaining to the particular configuration of the family

that attended the workshop. Then, if applicable, sibling interactions and home writing for

the specific family are discussed.

The five families represented tremendously diverse backgrounds and their stories

are vastly different. Three findings evolved pertaining to ELL family engagement from

the somewhat messy and non-cohesive family stories:

1. Family involvement evidences itself differently for each family.

2. Family investment in the workshop's purpose is essential for participation.

3. Parents are teachers.

These findings are presented in Figure 4-1.

| Finding One: |
| Involvement Evidences Itself Differently |

| Finding Two: |
| Family Investment is Essential |

| Finding Three: |
| Parents Are Teachers |
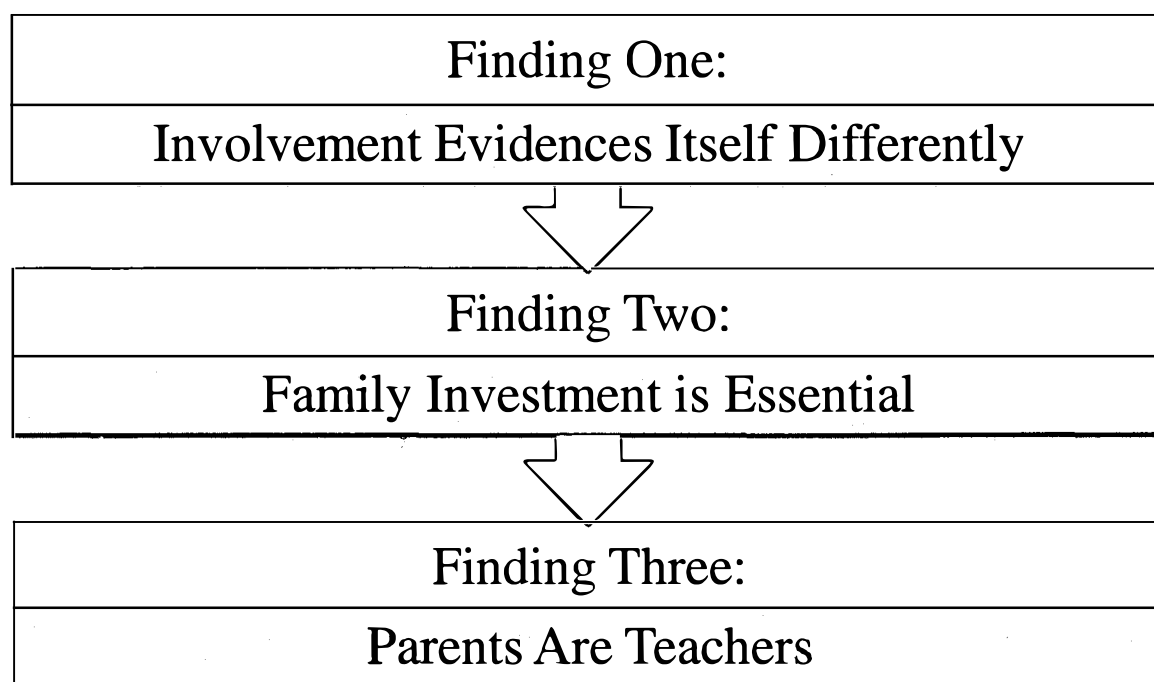
Figure 4-1. Dissertation findings.

The findings, drawn from the families' stories, come together to answer the

question: What were the experiences of ELL families during the writing workshop?

The Dono Family: The Family's Influence

In the workshop, children sought their parents' assistance and wrote to seek their

parents' praises. In the Dono family, Richard and Victoria Dono mainly attended by

themselves; Mr. Dono attended the first and third sessions, out of the total nine workshop

sessions. On the other evenings he dropped them off and returned to pick them up,

coming in during the last fifteen minutes. Each evening when he brought the children to

our classroom, I asked him if he was planning to stay, but he replied, "No." Even for the

publishing party on the last day, he told me he was not going to stay. Despite not being

physically present at the workshop, Richard, a rising second-grader, and Victoria, a rising

kindergartner, were influenced by their family. This strong family influence impacted Richard and Victoria in their writing topics and writer identity.

Writing topics. In the first week of the workshop, children used puppets, props, and photos to tell oral stories about. More often than not, the story children told that day became the story they wrote. On a few occasions, though, writers wrote stories developed by a different idea. Richard and Victoria frequently wrote about their family.

Aside from the first workshop, family served as Richard's topic for the remaining duration of the workshop. On the second day, when all of the other children created written stories about the toys they brought in, even though he also brought a toy in, Richard wrote why he loved each family member. However, when we shared photos on the third day, Richard did bring a picture of his family and wrote about what was alluded to in the picture. During the second week of the workshop, Richard was struggling getting started when I asked him to tell me about his favorite thing in the world. Eventually, Richard smiled as he said, "I like scary movies. Watching scary movies with my family." Whereas the other writers varied on how much they wrote about their families, Richard consistently wrote about his family. He drafted five pieces of writing, four of which were about his family. When he chose a piece to publish into a book, he selected his draft of "My Sunday Church Service," a piece inspired by a photo he brought in and the draft he had worked on with his father.
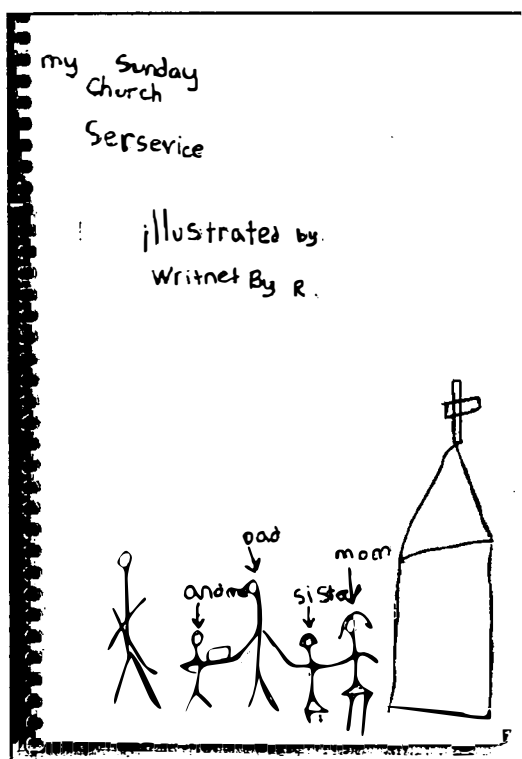
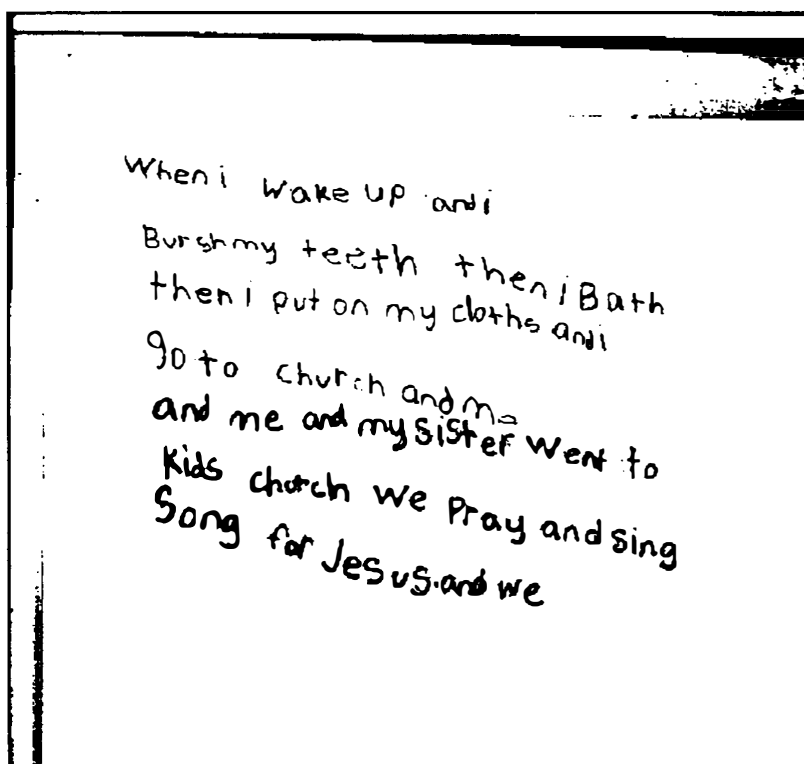*Figure 4-2.* Richard's cover from his published book: "My Sunday Church Service."

Figure 4-3. Richard, page one, "My Sunday Church Service."

> When I wake up and I brush my teeth then I bath then I put on my clothes and I go to church and me and me and my sister went to kids church we pray and sing song for Jesus and we...

With the exception of one evening, Victoria always included her family in what she wrote. Sometimes her entire books were about her family, just telling about the family members. Other stories told about things the family did together. When she wrote a topic book about things she loved, each family member was written about. Figure 4-4 shows a page from this book.

Figure 4-4. Victoria's family writing.

> I love my mom and dad. My parent and brother were born in Ghana and me and baby sister were born in America. My mom like cooking.

Even though Richard and Victoria's family served as their writing topic, the family's place in the written story varied from the things they did together to describing the specific family members. It was evident from their writing topics that family was not only important to Richard and Victoria, but the parents' influence had a tremendous impact on the children.

Writers' identity. One such way the family influenced the children was on their writing identity. While the children's writing topics gave a glimpse of this, particular sentences within their writing, observations, and conferences showed how their father influenced their writing identity.

Anchored in the father. Prior to the start of the workshop, both the family coordinator and the ESOL teacher at the children's school described the father as being involved and as the ESOL teacher stated, "If it [the writing workshop] fits with the family's schedule, they will definitely be there." Even though he did not regularly come, Mr. Dono was the only father who was involved in the workshop. The rest of the parent workshop participants were the mothers. It was through him the importance of school and learning were instilled in his children. Richard's writing directly connects his father and learning. In Figure 4-5 below, he explains why he loves each family member, specifically in this example, his father.
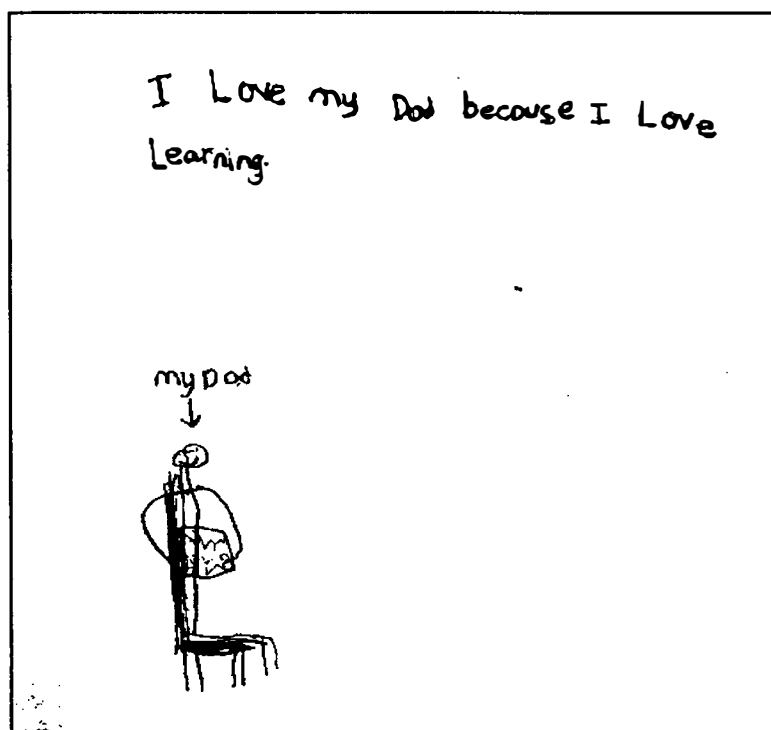
Figure 4-5. Richard's book on his family.

I love my dad because I love learning.

Richard's writing sample connects the family, specifically his father, with instilling in him the importance of learning.

Mr. Dono's actions correlated with his children's perceptions. Sometimes he directly told his children what they should do. On the workshop's first day, all of the children and parents were story telling with finger puppets. Mr. Dono did not sit with his children and tell stories, as the other mothers did. However, during writing time, he sat next to his children and oversaw both. Richard and Victoria wrote the puppet story they told about a dragon, conversing back and forth with their ideas, and passing the pencil, too. As I walked over, Richard and Victoria had set up a dialogue in their play so I explained quotation marks. Richard looked the other way and then marked on his paper when his father said, "Richard, listen to your teacher." As they returned to writing,

Victoria wrote what her character said, "I'm going to cook spaghetti." Then it was

Richard's turn to write. When they were orally telling the story, the dragon answered that

he only ate lava. As Richard began to write that, his dad said, "You should write 'I love

spaghetti'". Richard erased what he wrote and changed it to his father's idea. In this brief

conference, Mr. Dono directed Richard's actions. He identified me as the teacher, even

though I never stated I was, and therefore, Richard should listen to me. The piece is

below.
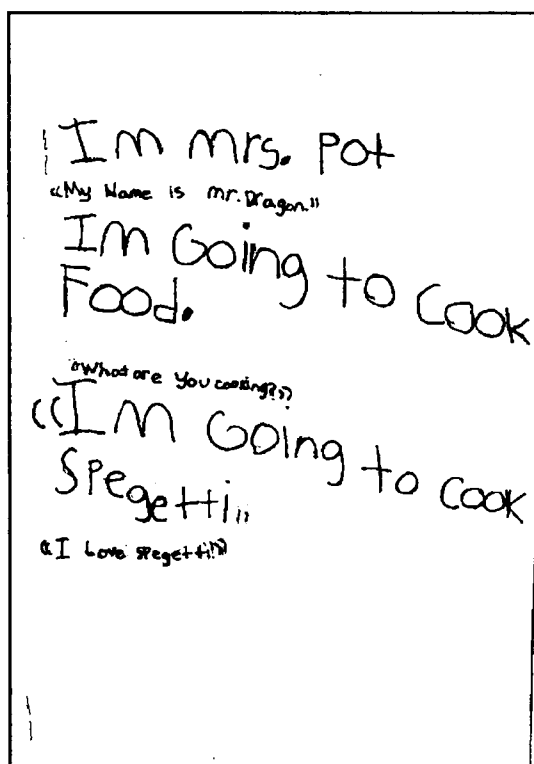
Figure 4-6. Richard and Victoria's story.

Victoria: I'm Mrs. Pot
Richard: My name is Mr. Dragon.
Victoria: I'm going to cook food.
Richard: What are you cooking?
Victoria: I'm going to cook spaghetti.
Richard: I love spaghetti.

At other times, he scaffolded his help to coach his children in learning, rather than telling. The focus of the third workshop was to "tell more," essentially elaborate, their stories. Then, this interaction transpired:

Richard sitting next to his father, worked on his book about his Sunday church service:

Richard: I go to church with my family

Me: Well, what else...tell me more. What do you wear to church?

Mr. Dono: What do you do before?

Richard: I get ready.

Mr. Dono: What do you do to get ready? You shower, you get dressed...

In this example, Mr. Dono helped Richard through an assisted approach. Even though his physical presence at the workshop was minimal, he was involved when he was there. Moreover, even when he was not physically present, because of the degree Richard and Victoria associated with him as the family teacher, they applied what he emphasized to their writing.

What writing is. Since Richard and Victoria identified their father as the source for learning, it was his definition of writing they both adopted. Mr. Dono thought writing was correct mechanics and length, and therefore so did Richard and Victoria. When I observed Richard and Victoria writing the dragon play from Figure 4-6, he corrected Victoria's spelling on the word 'spaghetti.' Even though his corrected spelling was incorrect, his action models to his children what is important in writing.

It is from this modeling that his children learned. Victoria had no trouble getting started with independent writing. At various points in the summer she told me, "I can't

wait to fill the whole page." Then she immediately sat down and filled pages with

sentences, as shown in Figure 4-7. While her mechanics, particularly her spelling, was

impressive for a four-year-old, her pages of writing never connected to form a cohesive

story. Our conferences dealt with how she could tell more about one thing, instead of
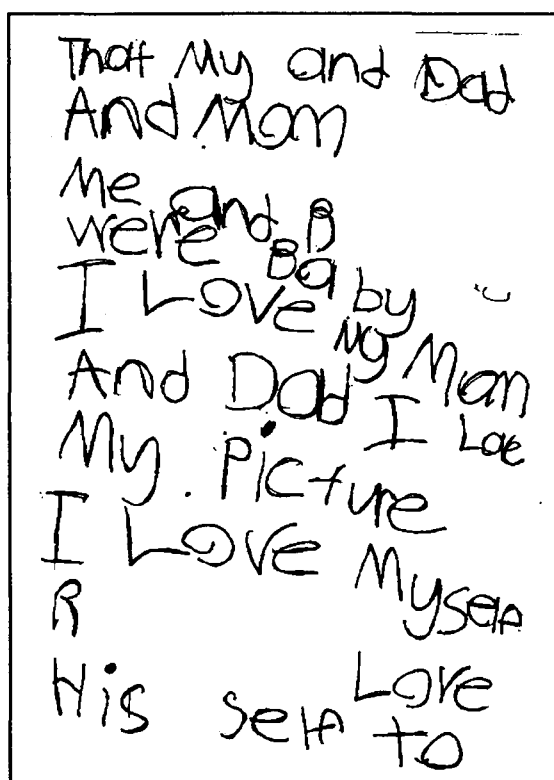
telling a little about lots of things.

Figure 4-7. Victoria filling a whole page.

That my and dad and mom me and Richard were baby. I love my mom and dad I love my picture I love myself Richard love his self to.

In addition, she and I talked about how illustrations add to a story. When she was

publishing her book on her family, I observed her work in progress.

Me: Victoria, what about adding some illustrations? Look at this book (showing a book from the supply shelf). Do you see how beautiful the pictures are?

Victoria: But my daddy wants me to write the whole page. (Meaning a picture would take up writing space)

Me: But illustrations can tell the story, too. The pictures can show what the words are about.

She then selected a few markers and began adding illustrations to the pages she already wrote. Towards the end of the workshop, I checked on her again. Her father arrived at this point and sat next to Richard. Victoria, nearby, drew illustrations on most pages with a single brown marker. Of a fourteen-page book, some pages lacked illustrations, while others had a quickly drawn illustration. Only one page had significant details, truly reflecting what was happening on that page.
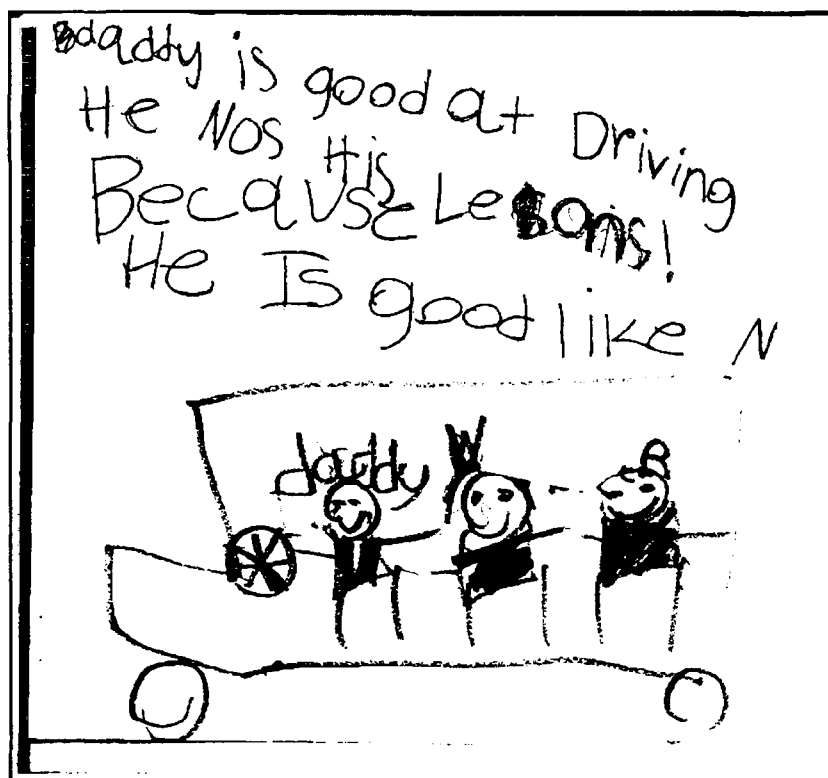

Figure 4-8. A page from Victoria's published book.

Daddy is good at driving he knows his lessons! He is good like M(ommy).

Earlier, Figure 4-7 represents Victoria's writing when she worked with her father. The page is filled, but there is no consistent story. Figure 4-8, however, is a page from her published story, and shows the results of a conference I held with her, in it, Victoria told more, specifically, about what made her father a good driver, added a picture, and included picture labels. Victoria learned from her father that writing is not about the concept of a story, but rather about how many words you can correctly spell on the page. In order to please her father, she worked hard to meet his expectations of writing. This contrasted from the approach I used at the workshop. Furthermore, Mr. Dono's absences at the workshop did not allow him to learn more about my approach to writing that supported his children as writers in a different way.

The impact on Richard. After our mini-lesson concluded during our fourth workshop, I told the writers to get what paper they needed and then they could sit with their families and start writing. Immediately after, Richard came up to me and asked whom he should write with since his dad was not there. I suggested Victoria, since she was also his family, but he did not like this idea. I reassured him I would be there to work with him, but this did not seem to be the support he wanted. He spent the majority of the writing time playing with his pencil. When I sat down and talked with him he told me he did not know what to write about, and tears filled the bottoms of his eyes.

Richard, in the sessions his father was not at, seemed uninterested in writing, opting to play with the various writing materials rather than write. This was the first time, however, Richard seemed visibly upset. At the conclusion of this workshop, I spoke to Mr. Dono when he came to pick up his children about how Richard seemed uninterested. As Richard ran around in the parking lot, Mr. Dono explained, "Richard used to be ahead

of Victoria, but not anymore. Richard would rather watch TV at home, whereas Victoria

reads." Even though Richard was two years older than Victoria, he perceived himself to

be on the same academic level as her, negatively impacting his self-perceptions about his

ability. Moreover, since his father was the source of this comparison, Richard sought his

father's approval even more.

Richard's desire to please his father was highlighted at the publishing party. At

the end of the publishing party, I gave out writing certificates to each of the children.

Richard looked at me, shaking his head, and said he did not want his certificate. "Why

are you not proud or happy?" I asked. "I wanted my dad to see it," Richard replied,

referring to his dad's absence at the publishing party. Even though Richard had spent four

workshops playing around for the majority of writing time, when I informed the children

they would be publishing a book, his behavior changed. For two sessions he wrote an

eight-page book about attending his church service; publishing was motivating. His father

was incredibly influential to Richard's writing, as well as his feelings of self-worth, his

father's absence was especially devastating since his father was not there to witness

Richard's unveiling of his hard work.

Sibling interaction. Since Mr. Dono was absent most evenings, Richard and

Victoria sat together at a table during writing time. While they typically wrote

independently, there were daily, brief conversations between the two. Some of those

interactions were about spelling. Even though Richard did not feel he was a better writer

than his young sister, he offered her help on spelling words.

Writing at home. Both Dono children wrote in their home journals. Over the first

weekend, Victoria filled approximately forty pages, many consisting of pages from

stories directly copied from books. Richard did something similar, but only copying one page from a storybook. Over the second weekend, when parents were asked to write back and forth with their children, Mr. Dono wrote questions to his children, and they both answered (see Figures 4-9 and 4-10).
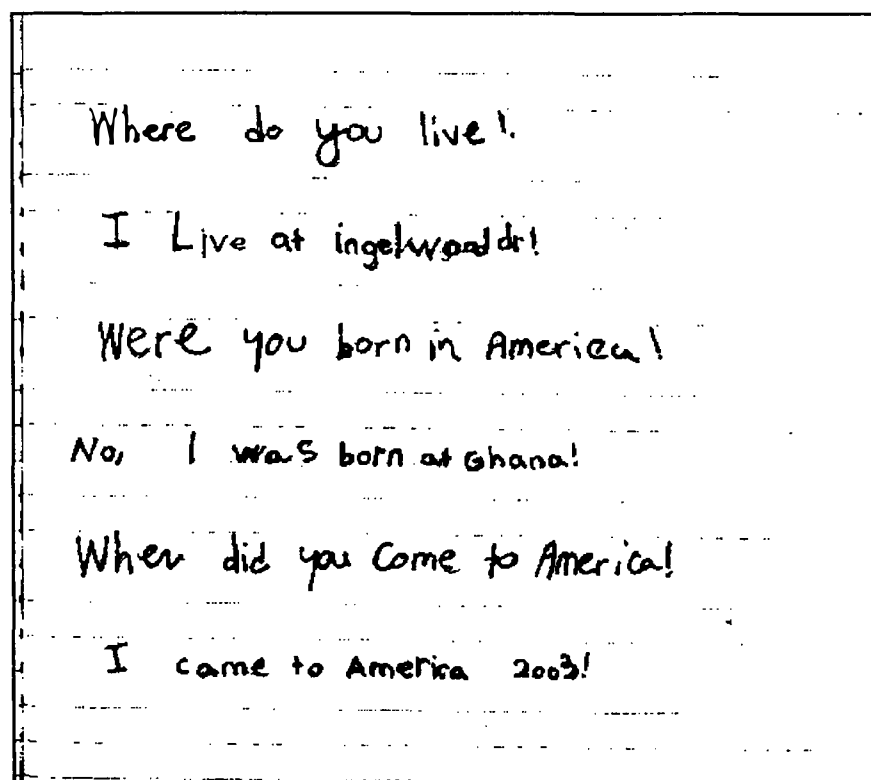

Figure 4-9. Richard's home journal, week two.

Mr. Dono: Where do you live!
Richard: I live at Inglewood Dr. !
Mr. Dono: Were you born in America!
Richard: No, I was born at Ghana!
Mr. Dono: When did you come to America!
Richard: I came to America 2003!
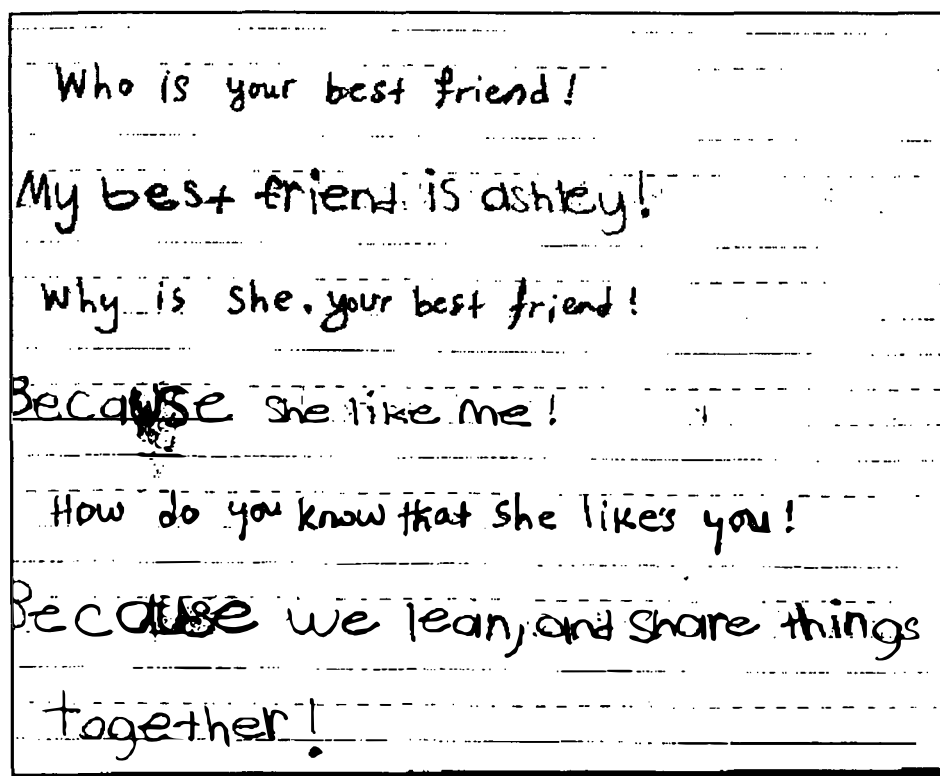
Figure 4-10. Victoria's home journal, week two.

| Mr. Dono: Who is your best friend! |
| Victoria: My best friend is Ashley! |
| Mr. Dono: Why is she your best friend! |
| Victoria: Because she likes me! |
| Mr. Dono: How do you know that she likes you! |
| Victoria: Because we learn, and share things together! |

From looking at the children's writing samples, both the questions and responses end in an exclamation point. Second, while some of the questions are the same, the majority are specific to each child, asking about their lives—such as their friends, favorite sports, etc. However most questions asked are ones he knew the answers to, i.e. where they were born; their address; their name, etc. Even though he was not present at the workshop when the home journals were discussed, Mr. Dono took time to write in them with his children.

The Jackson Family

As I got to know Korlu and Miatta Jackson throughout the duration of the workshop and beyond, the word 'eager' immediately comes to mind. They were eager—in their own different ways—about everything. With writing, Korlu quietly, yet intensely, worked independently. Miatta, on the other hand, while more outspoken, thrived from the positive assurance of others. Despite their different characteristics, both girls, throughout the workshop, were eager to learn. The two narratives below, *Car Rides* and *Mommy's Involvement* demonstrate the girls' eagerness to learn and how through this, they grew as writers.

The car rides. I drove the girls each night to and from the workshop. These car rides provided opportunities for additional conversations about the girls' day, as well as their general thoughts about the workshop and themselves as writers. From time to time the girls struggled with deciding what to write about at the workshop; sometimes we used the car rides to brainstorm about what they could write about. More often than not, these ideas did not make it past our car ride, but on one occasion, our trip to the workshop served as Korlu's writing idea.

Each day when I picked the girls up, I parked the car in their apartment building's parking lot and walked up the steps to the front door. On this particular day, Korlu led the way back to the car, opting to walk down the small, grassy hill as Miatta and I followed behind on the paved sidewalk and steps. Korlu, turning back to look at us, lost her footing in her one-size-too-big flip-flops, slipped and resulted in rolling down the hill. She stood up and Miatta and I instantly began laughing; then Korlu joined in. As we got into the car, we continued laughing, with each of us orally replaying the situation.

At the workshop that evening, Korlu struggled to find a writing idea. "Do you know what would make a great story?" I asked. "What?" Korlu inquired. "What happened on the way here…that was hilarious!" I replied. "When I fell down the hill?" "Yep," I replied. Korlu left to go write her story, with the details fresh in her mind.

When it came time to choose a story to publish, Korlu originally picked her story about the Fourth of July. However, after flipping through it together, I told her it was finished. Each page was covered beautiful illustrations, adding to her written story of the fireworks. There would not be anything for her to add to it in the next few days.

Instead I asked her if there was another story she could add more to, and she pulled out her 'slipping on the grass' story. This time on our story flip-through, I pointed out that when if she chose to publish this story, she could tell more about what happened through her pictures, like she did in her Fourth of July story. "For example," I said, "You are on a hill, but that's not what I see in your picture. That's the stuff we want to see in pictures. Your words tell a lot of the story—so keep that the same—but also have your pictures tell the story. I also like this cool font you tried—trying more of that would be great." Figures 4-11 and 4-12 show the cover and page one of this draft.

Figure 4-11. Korlu Draft. Title Page: When I fell on the grass onto the sidewalk.
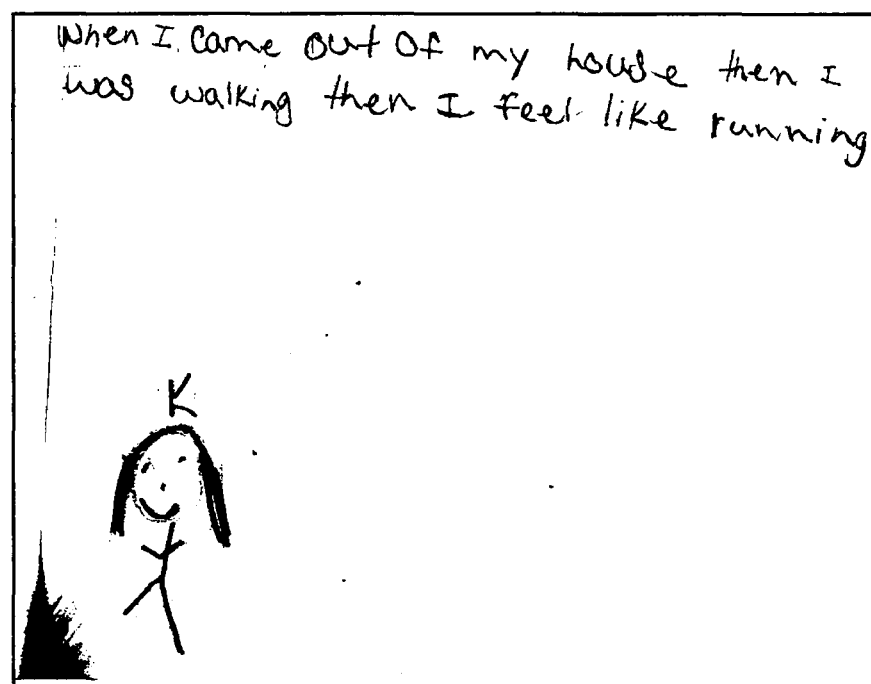

Figure 4-12. Korlu draft, page one.

When I came out of my house then I was walking then I feel like running.

Korlu's remaining pages looked similar to Figure 4-12; a simple stick figure with the text written above. When our conversation finished, Korlu had ideas of how to add to her illustrations. She checked in with me once, "You mean like this?" she asked about her picture. Her new picture showed a steeper hill, instead of a flat piece of grass. "Yes," I replied. "I can definitely see the hill in your picture now." She independently continued with her illustrations the rest of the day, and into the next, only briefly checking in with me. She focused on details and used oil pastels to add to the complexity of her illustrations. When it was finished, she beamed as she brought it over. The pictures told the story:
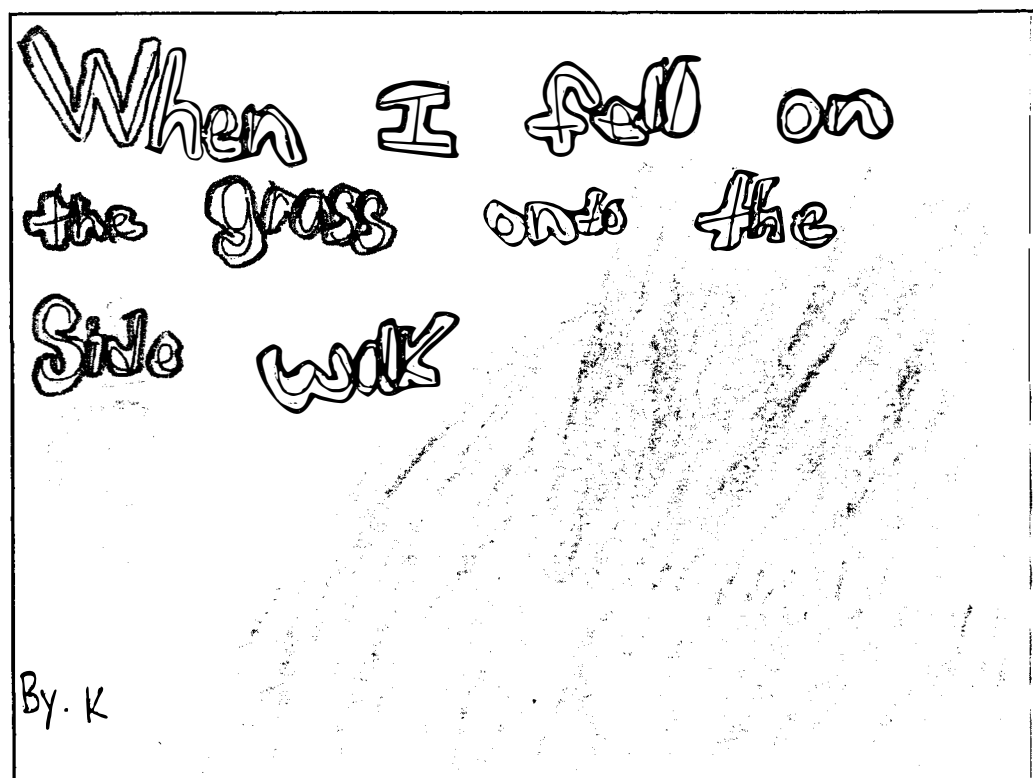

Figure 4-13. Korlu, published story, title page.

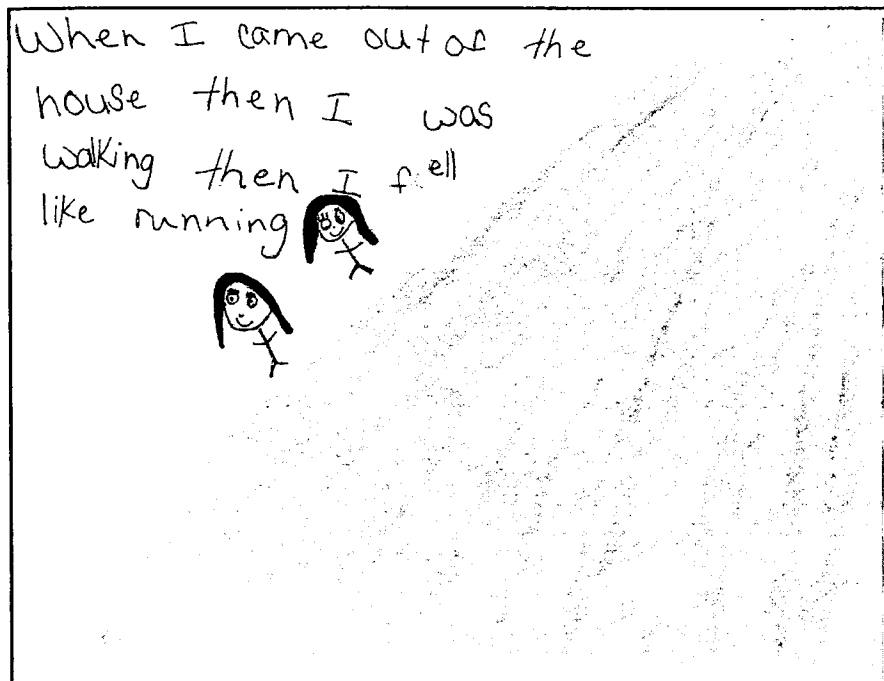When I fell on the grass onto the sidewalk

Figure 4-14. Korlu, published story, page one.

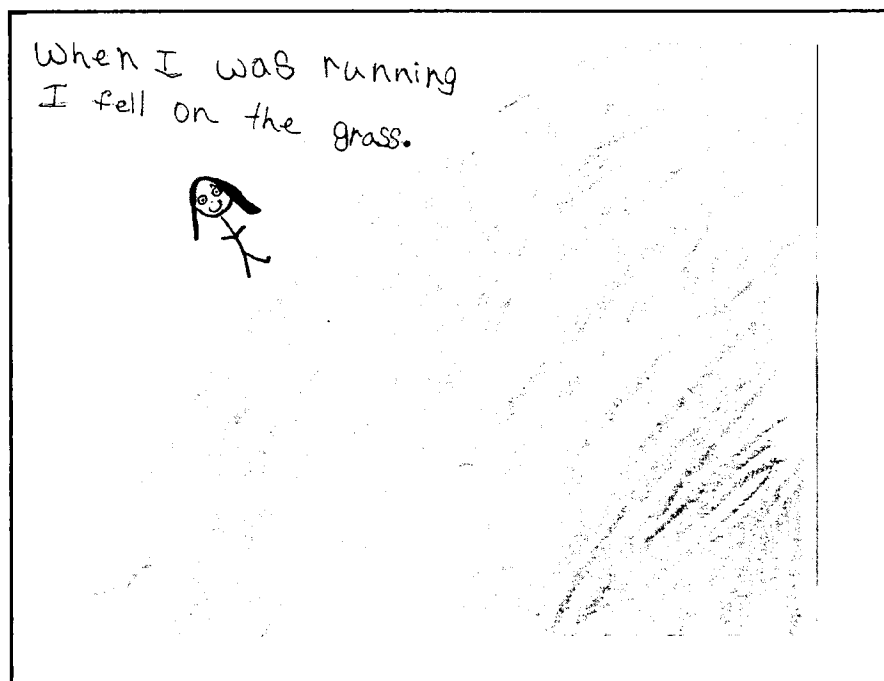When I came out of the house then I was walking then I feel like running.

Figure 4-15. Korlu, published story, page two.
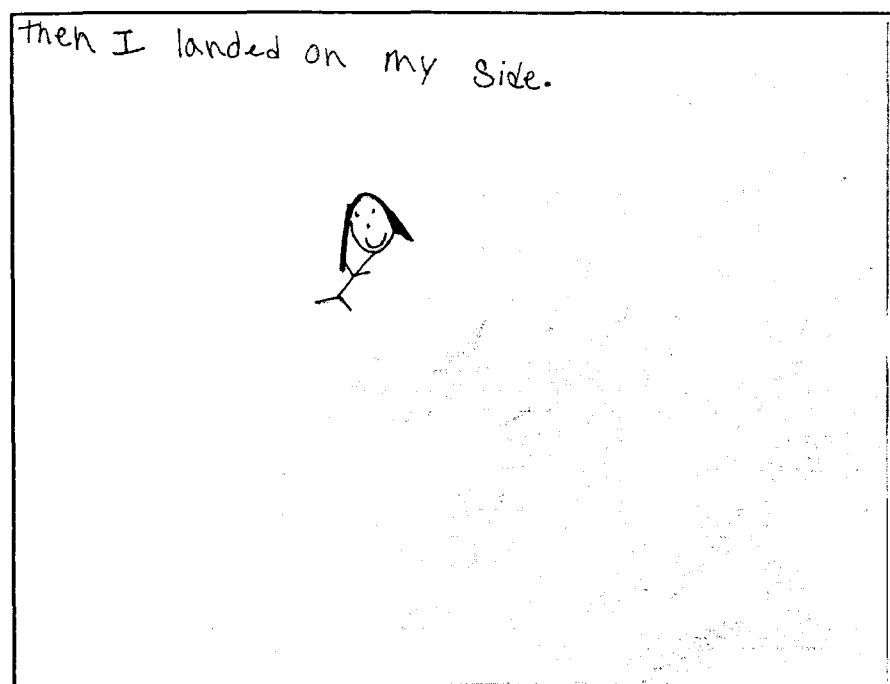
When I was running I fell on the grass.

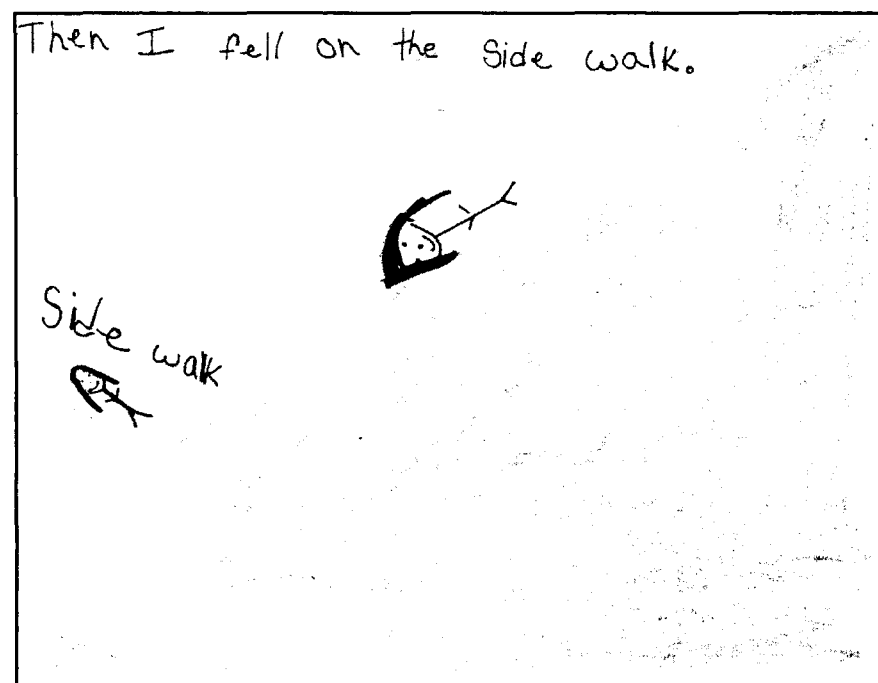*Figure 4-16.* Korlu, published story, page three.

Then I landed on my side.

Figure 4-17. Korlu, published story, page four.
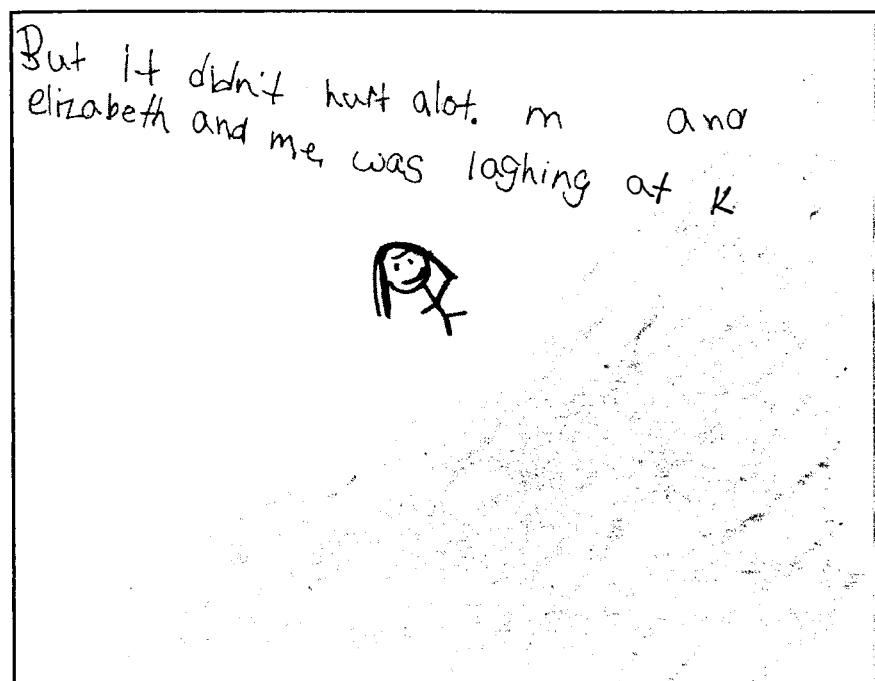
Then I fell on the sidewalk.

Figure 4-18. Korlu, published story, page five.

But it didn't hurt a lot. Miatta and Elizabeth and me was laughing at Korlu.

Whereas Korlu initially connected her concept of a story to 'having a title,' through this workshop she learned that written stories can be the day-to-day things that happen in our lives. By having the additional time together from driving them to and from the workshop, I was able to assist Korlu in recognizing the stories that happen everyday in her life.

In addition, when she connected oral stories with life's events, her written stories became more focused. Figure 4-19 is a piece of writing from the beginning of the workshop. She used finger puppets to orally tell the story about the dragon, and then transferred it to a written story. Even though the page is filled with words, the words go in multiple directions never telling a cohesive story.

Figure 4-19. Miatta's dragon story.

> There was this dragon who was a super hero. The dragon saw the scary monster. He scared the dragon when he scared the dragon the dragon went under the busy. Hiding branches shaking, trees moving, legs shaking, legs shivering all day long. Trees bumping together. When the dragon and the scary monster the monster is mean and wicked and not that nice. The dragon really mean's mean and wicked and so, so, so, so, so, so, so, so scary. Really scary super dragon on the way. And when the scary monster fall he was pretending he fell but he didn't help the scary mean…

At the first night of the workshop when I asked the children what a story was,

Korlu responded: "You need a piece of paper first. Then you write the title. Then you

start with a capital letter. And you can start with 'Once upon a time…' or, 'There was…'.

After you're done, you give the teacher the papers, you can color, and that's all." Korlu's

dragon story represents her initial misconceptions of what a story was. To grow as a

writer, Korlu needed additional help in discovering what a story was. Our additional time

we shared together through car rides provided me with additional ways of helping Korlu

find a story idea through what she experienced. In doing so, Korlu found an event she could write a cohesive personal narrative about.

The above vignette shows my influence on Korlu on the evenings when her mother did not attend. I was not able to observe Mrs. Jackson and Korlu's interactions together during the workshop because when Mrs. Jackson came, she sat with Miatta.

When Mommy came. For the first half of the workshop sessions, Mrs. Jackson was not present, due to family circumstances or being tired from work. Mrs. Jackson missed the first week completely, came one day the second week, and came for all three days the last week. Thus Korlu and Miatta were by themselves during the family writing time on five of the nine evenings. Most evenings they sat away from each other, in their own space, and wrote. Korlu enjoyed writing by herself, only talking with me during our conferences or when she was at a stopping point and wanted to show me something. Miatta, on the other hand, needed my assistance frequently, often because she was apprehensive about attempting to spell. She seemed to enjoy the social aspect of writing and typically sat near Victoria.

As of the fifth day of the workshop, Mrs. Jackson had been only once. Miatta was having trouble getting started. "I can't," she said to me. "Stop. Don't say that. If you can tell a story, you can write a story." As I told her I could not provide immediate help to her because I was assisting someone else, her tears began. Her writing frustration reached a climax and perceiving that no help was available, crying was her outlet.

Miatta struggled with her concept of herself as a writer because she compared herself to Korlu; her spelling ability did not compare to Korlu. Each day, she asked me how to spell words or I would observe her looking at the alphabet chart in the room or

looking at her tricky word list. Even though I only knew her a short time, she demonstrated a lot of anxiety over spelling. On our car ride to the second official workshop, Korlu confirmed Miatta's doubts:

Korlu: I don't need help with writing like Miatta does.

Me: Why is that?

Korlu: Because Miatta can't spell.

Me: Well, we all need help with writing, but with different things. Miatta does a great job of telling one thing in her story, whereas you could work on this Korlu. And Miatta can spell when she listens to each sound.

Miatta's uncertainty with spelling was demonstrated by her actions and her sister's words. Moreover, her association that being a good writer meant being a good speller blocked her realization of her writing talents. The lack of individual, adult support she felt she needed to be successful was dramatically impacting her self-confidence.

Despite calling each day to confirm Mrs. Jackson's attendance, I decided to address her lack of attendance because of its impact on Miatta. I consulted with the liaison that connected me with the Jackson family, Mindy Sansen. She decided she would call Mrs. Jackson before the start of next week's workshop and then again on the day of the workshop to confirm her coming. Then, if Mrs. Jackson said she could not go, she would address it. The last week of the workshop arrived, and Mindy informed me she spoke with Mrs. Jackson and the whole family, aside from Mr. Jackson, would be coming.

On Tuesday afternoon, I picked up Mrs. Jackson, Korlu, Miatta, and Momo. Mrs. Jackson sat back from the group when the workshop began, opting to sit at a table and watch. Her 18-month-old son, Momo, ran around, exploring the new room. During

writing time, Miatta sat next to her mother, and wrote the entire time, while Mrs. Jackson looked on, frequently spelling words for her. Figures 4-20 and 4-21 show Miatta's 'Tricky Word List' before her mother came and then immediately after her mother came.

Name __		
My Tricky Words		
Once upon a time		
Fire work		
She		
friend		★
Princess		
Beauty		
family		
Elizabeth		
★		

Figure 4-20. Miatta's list before Mrs. Jackson came.

My Tricky Words

Once upon a time	has	and
Fire worm	pink	one
She	hair	brother
firend	and	is
Princess	blue	
~~Beauty~~	dress	
family	father	
Elizabeth	is	
name	mother	
sister	Two	

Figure 4-21. Miatta's list after her mother's assistance.

As I walked over, Mrs. Jackson asked me: "Elizabeth, how do you spell Washington?" Since Mrs. Jackson missed the mini-lessons on how to assist with inventive spelling, rather than telling, I took this opportunity to demonstrate a couple of ways, reinforcing she should help Miatta with spelling, not telling her how to spell a word, so she could learn how to sound out words. After completing the last page, Miatta read her pages to me and then Mrs. Jackson helped her correctly number the pages. Mrs. Jackson's use of the 'Tricky Word List' and asking how to spell words demonstrated her involvement. Regardless of her past absences, Mrs. Jackson was not only present at the workshop, but she was committed to helping Miatta.

Mrs. Jackson's presence positively impacted Miatta. On the car ride back that evening, Miatta announced to us: "I wrote a lot better because my momma was there to help." The piece she wrote that day with her mother, is what she chose to publish. This confidence carried over into her writing.
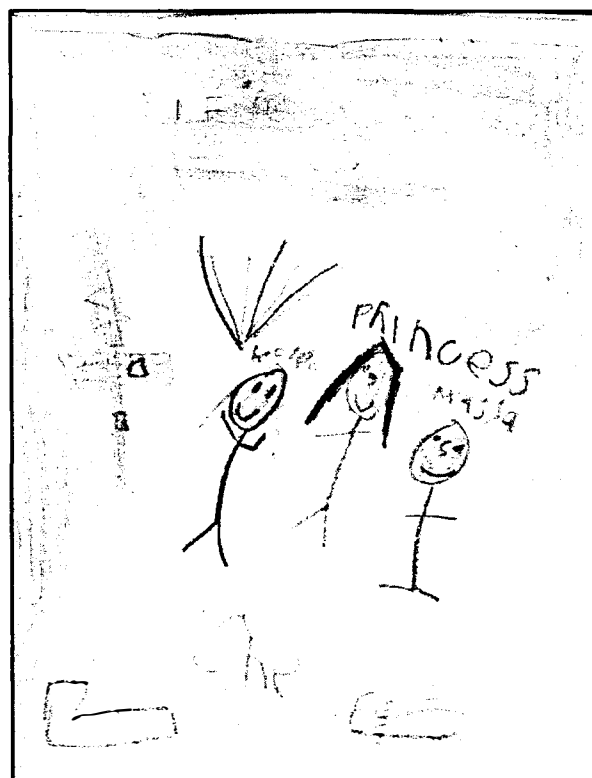
Figure 4-22. Miatta's Fourth of July.

Figure 4-22 is an earlier piece of writing Miatta wrote on her own about the Fourth of July, and it represents her as a writer. Her bright illustrations instantly grab a reader's attention. She focused on illustrations, in lieu of words, because of her apprehension with inventive spelling. In the piece above, her written words consist of one sight word (she); friends and family member names; and the word 'firework' which I had modeled. With her mother's assistance, though, her written story matched her oral story,

while still including colorful illustrations. Figures 4-23 through 4-25 below are pages

from her final book she published with her mother's assistance.

Figure 4-23. Miatta's published story, page one.

Once upon a time was a girl name Miatta Jackson. She has pink hair and blue dress. Her father name is Beylean Jackson and her mother name is Mrs. Jackson. She two sister and one brother her sister is Miatta and Korlu.

Figure 4-24. Miatta's published book, page two.

Her brother Momo. Sky (picture label)

Figure 4-25. Miatta's published book, page three.

> I like going to Washington Pool.

When her mother was present, Miatta also captured her idea with words. Miatta's published book shows the positive impact of parents' presence on a child's writing and the child's perception of his or her ability.

Sibling interaction and writing at home. As previously described, Korlu and Miatta rarely interacted during the workshop. In addition, they did not use their home journals to continue writing at home. On the weekend when families wrote back and forth to each other, Miatta and Korlu corresponded with our mutual friend, Mindy Sansen. Mrs. Jackson's home-involvement in her children's writing, within the context of my study, did not seem to exist.

The Galache Family

The Galaches lived in the United States the past year because Mr. Galache was enrolled in a MBA program at a prestigious state university. While they have family in the United States, Mr. Galache's education was their main reason for being in the United States. Like the Dono family, the school told me the parents were very involved in their children's school. The Galaches were the only participants recruited solely by a flier, no home visits or phone calls. I sent an email to Mrs. Galache to confirm their participation. Once they returned from vacation, Mrs. Galache, her six-year old son, Adalbert, and three-year old daughter, Alicia, attended.

Mrs. Galache avidly supported her children's literacy development. As a researcher in Adalbert's kindergarten's classroom during the months preceding our summer workshop, I knew he enjoyed writing. At the end of the school year, I had talked with him about being a writer.

> Adalbert: When I write I can write whatever I want and when I write I feel like I have more ideas of different stories and I do different stories and I stories of dinosaurs, volcanoes, and I do books in my book that have a lot stories.
>
> Me: Where do you get these ideas?
>
> Adalbert: I read a lot of books to give me information and I read a lot books to give me more ideas.
>
> Me: Do you write books?
>
> Adalbert: Yes, at my house.
>
> Me: With who?
>
> Adalbert: My mom. We draw the lines for the writing and then we do the pictures and then we do the title. And then when it is done, we put it so it can be a real book. Like authors have real books. And we make a lot of books.

From this conversation I learned the Galache family was already writing together; they were the only family that entered the workshop with this experience. This workshop allowed the Galache family to build on their pre-existing literacy knowledge, using both Spanish and English.

Mrs. Galache as a teacher. Mrs. Galache's time with each of her children improved them as writers. Her approach to how she assisted each child varied. Adalbert had just completed kindergarten, was an independent phonetic speller and read at approximately the second-grade level. He was a fluent reader, writer, and speaker in both Spanish and English, something that set him apart from the other Hispanic participants. Adalbert was not only good at learning languages, but often contemplated their principles. During the school year, he once commented to me how Spanish was easier to learn because the vowels only made one sound. Another time, Adalbert asked his kindergarten teacher why the 'ch' in the word 'school' did not say /ch/ like in chair. Adalbert was very aware of the environment in which he lived.

Alicia, was two years younger than Adalbert, and was equally as engaged in the world around her. Each day she walked into the workshop wide-eyed and eager to share her stories. Even though she was fluent in Spanish, she spoke conversational English, sometimes relying on her mother or brother to give her the English word.

Assisting Adalbert. With Adalbert, Mrs. Galache applied many of the mini-lessons to assist in his writing. By doing so, she enabled Adalbert's growth as a writer, as demonstrated by the following vignette.

As a group, we just finished a mini-lesson on telling more in our stories by using our fingers to tell a story. I shared my weekend story, consisting of three pages, a

sentence on each: "I went home. I took a plane. It was the Fourth of July." I asked the

children if there was anything they wanted to know more about, after hearing my book.

After a few questions, I tell my story again, using my fingers to separate out each of the

events of my weekend. I retell my story, with the children's assistance, telling more.

When I finished, the children dispersed throughout the room to tell more about the

weekend. I joined Adalbert and his mother. Adalbert selected a pre-stapled book and

titled it "Some of my favorite weeks." He has not begun writing yet on the inside page.

> Me: I see your title is 'Some of my favorite weeks.' What are you going to write
> about?

> Adalbert: A trip I just got back from with my family.

> Me: Ok, can you tell me more about it?

> Mrs. Galache: Adalbert, what else did you do? First… (she holds out her thumb
> referring to telling a story across your fingers)

Adalbert responded in Spanish, then the rest of the conversation continued in

Spanish. Mrs. Galache used her fingers to separate the events they did on their trip. When

Adalbert wrote, as a result of his mother's help, the events in his story were planned.

Figure 4-26 is his draft. It is interesting to note even though his mom and he orally

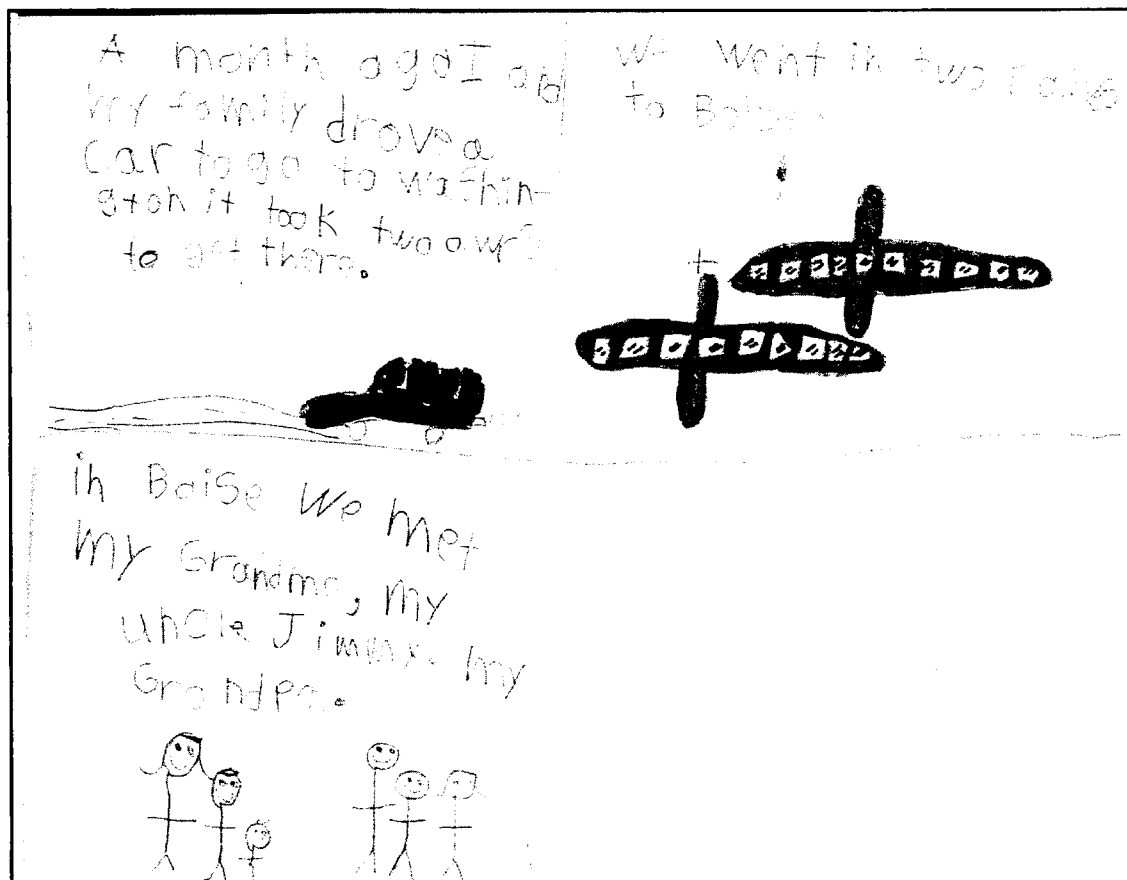collaborated in Spanish, his draft is written in English.

Figure 4-26. Adalbert, draft.

Top Left: A month ago I and my family drove a car to go to Washington it took two hours to get there.
Top Right: We went in two planes to Boise.
Bottom Left: In Boise we met my Grandma, my uncle Jimmy, my Grandpa.

With Adalbert, she was specific and deliberate in how she helped him, yet never

directed him in what to write. She insisted, though, he attempt as much as possible on his

own. For example, Adalbert always began his writing by telling it. When he wrote,

though, he often forgot what he had said when he told his story. From my suggestion,

Mrs. Galache started writing Adalbert's oral story down on a post it, so she could tell him

his story if he forgot. When Adalbert asked just to see the post-it so he could copy it, she

said no. She read it back to him, but he could not copy it because he needed to try the

spelling on his own. Mrs. Galache provided lots of help, but never directly told Adalbert how to do something.

Throughout the rest of the workshop, Mrs. Galache encouraged Adalbert to tell her more and had him draft his writing by telling it across his fingers. I also fielded her questions and showed her how to help Adalbert spelling longer words, by breaking the word into syllables and then phonetically spell, syllable by syllable. In our final interview, I asked her what she found most useful about the workshop: "It was the small things—like telling me more or using the fingers to tell the story—that were very helpful." Even though Mrs. Galache fervently supported her children's literacy development at home, the mini-lessons provided a way to extend her knowledge of how to specifically assist Adalbert in these efforts.

Assisting Alicia. With Alicia, Mrs. Galache differentiated her help by encouraging Alicia's ideas and helping her with tasks that required fine motor skills. On Alicia's second day at the workshop, she chose a pre-stapled book and began writing. The following conversation between Alicia and her mother occurred in Spanish as Alicia was writing:

> Mrs. Galache: What are we talking about?
>
> Alicia: I don't know. (long pause) My father was born in a crib. He fell in the water and he grew.
>
> Mrs. Galache: So did the water make him grow?
>
> Alicia: Yes.
>
> Mrs. Galache: What water did he fall in? In the pool? In the ocean?
>
> Alicia: In the pool. A good person takes care of the baby.
>
> Mrs. Galache: Was the mother in the pool?

Alicia: She was in the pool. With her daughter.

Mrs. Galache: So then how old was the baby?

Alicia: Four years.

In this conversation, Mrs. Galache asked questions that enabled Alicia to tell more about her story. By doing so, Mrs. Galache not only validated, she also encouraged Alicia's story telling.

Alicia received a picture dictionary as part of one day's mini-lesson; the letters intrigued her. She spent most of her writing time that day looking at the letters and writing them on the cover of her book. Alicia was especially intrigued by the lowercase 'e.' She asked me how to make it so I drew dotted lines in the shape of 'e' so she could trace over. Then, Alicia tried it. She was not pleased with her own attempts so she insisted her mother do it. Whereas Mrs. Galache had not previously written any letters, at this point she wrote lowercase e's on the cover of the book and physically held Alicia's hand to help her make them. Figures 4-27 through 4-30 shows this book, and the words

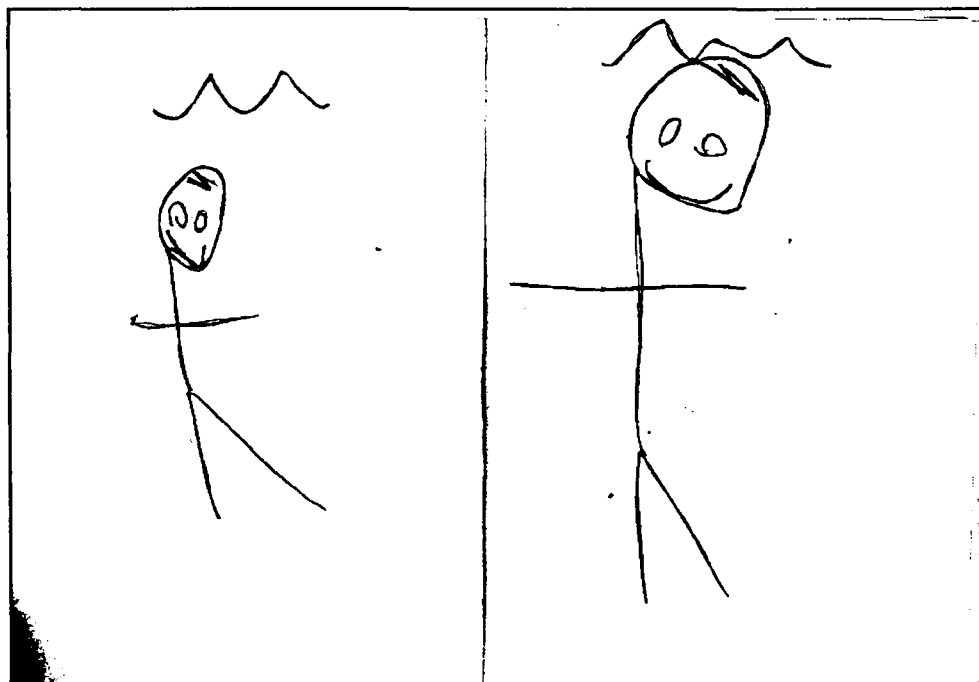Alicia read with each page while sharing.

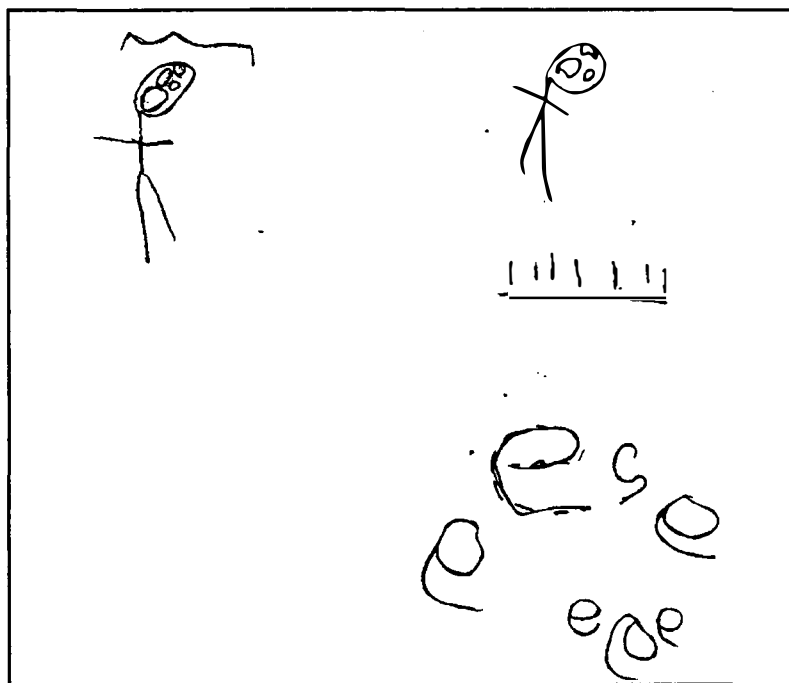*Figure 4-27.* Alicia, page one: "My mom and dad were watching TV, but my dad was tired."

Figure 4-28. Alicia, page two: "and my dad was in the shower but freezing cold."
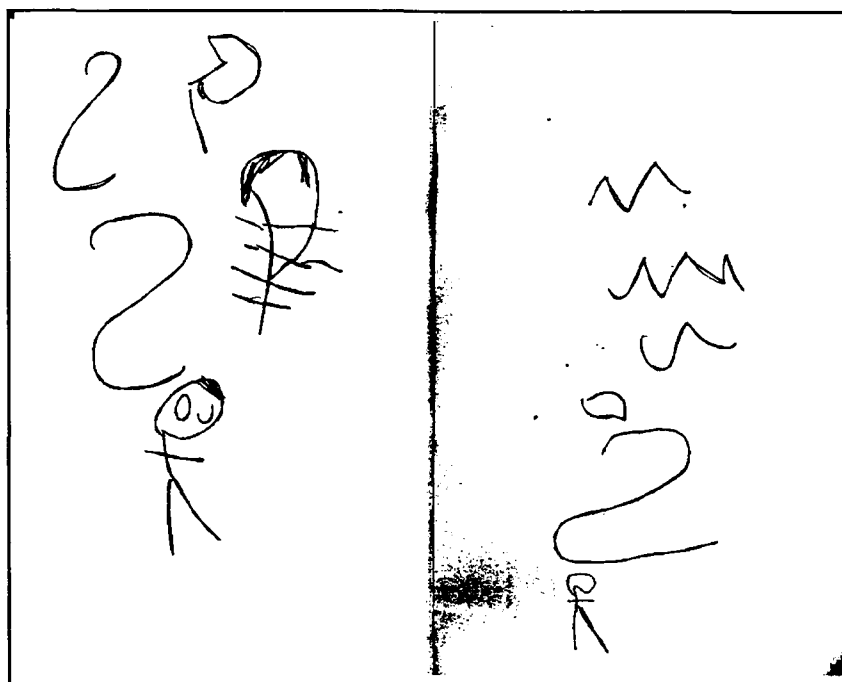
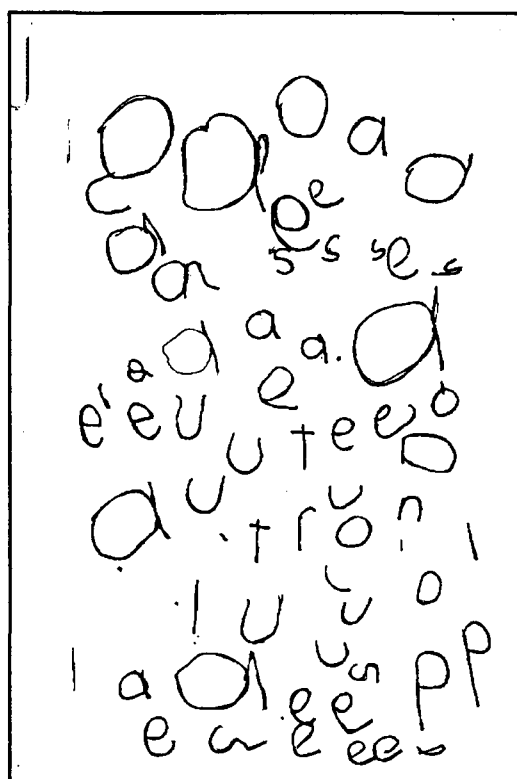*Figure 4-29.* Alicia, page three: "But my dad in the house now."

Figure 4-30. Alicia, cover: "And then look at this…"

When sharing, she shared in the order above, saving the cover for last. When she unveiled her cover—after being prompted by her brother—she turned it over very slowly. Once it was turned around, she looked at the group, wide-eyed, and did not say anything—as if waiting for large gasps of surprise by the audience.

Alicia spent the most time on her cover. Mrs. Galache recognized letter making was important to Alicia that day and supported her in her efforts to physically make the letters. She never once directed Alicia to put letters on other pages, or add more to her drawings; rather, she just let Alicia write.

Mrs. Galache assumed a different approach with each of her children. With Adalbert, she took a backseat role and coached him in becoming a better writer in the ways appropriate for him. To do this, she required more help from me, in both demonstrating explicit strategies for helping Adalbert and answering her questions with how to help him. With Alicia, Mrs. Galache followed what Alicia was interested in for that particular day. When Alicia was engaged in something, Mrs. Galache let her try it on her own or did it with her when she got frustrated. Her two similarities in her approach to working with her children are: 1) rather than direct her children, she went with their ideas, and 2) she knew when to push her children and when to back off. This formed her foundation for how she assisted her children and differentiated. In so doing, Mrs. Galache helped in areas that were developmentally appropriate for each child. She validated and encouraged each child as a writer.

Sibling interaction. While Adalbert and Alicia did occasionally socialize during the workshop, when it came time to write, they did not interact with each other. Both focused on their particular writing.

Adalbert and Alicia's interactions with each other during the workshop occurred when Alicia was in front of the whole group. The first occasion was Alicia's first day at the workshop and she was telling her oral story of something she did over the weekend. Alicia sat in the chair to share: "fireworks and cover ears (as she puts her hands over her ears)…and lots of colors." Adalbert then got up and whispered something into Alicia's ear: "…and then I swim all by myself." Even though Alicia did not ask for help, she welcomed Adalbert's suggestions for telling more about her weekend. Moreover, Adalbert's method of helping was respectful to both Alicia and the audience. He came up to her and whispered in her ear. It did not embarrass her, but let her tell her own story without spoiling it to the audience.

The second interaction between Adalbert and Alicia happened during the publishing party. It was Alicia's turn to share her counting book, written in Spanish, with her mother's help. Alicia, wearing a skirt for the occasion, sat in the Share Chair. I gave Alicia her freshly laminated book to read or show the audience. She nervously looked up and waved Adalbert over to her. She whispered something to him this time. Adalbert looked up at the audience: "I will tell it in Spanish and she can do it in English." Adalbert began reading, but Alicia never joined in. Instead, she just looked on with her brother.
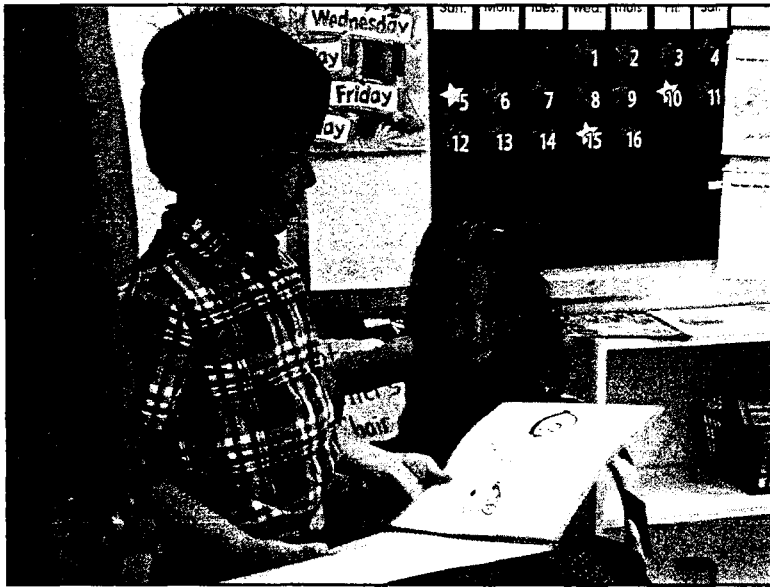
Figure 4-31. Adalbert reading for Alicia.

In this interaction, Adalbert offered assistance to his sister by dividing the responsibilities by language. Perhaps since Alicia could read neither, Adalbert thought by reading Spanish, that would provide Alicia with enough help to say the English translation. Even though Adalbert and Alicia did not interact frequently, in these two exchanges, Alicia not only looked to her brother for help, but he wanted to help her.

Writing at home. Both Alicia and Adalbert wrote in their home journal. Alicia's home journal had one page written in, consisting of a drawing of two stick figures. When parents and children were asked to write back-and-forth together, it was Adalbert's father who wrote with him (See Figure 4-32).
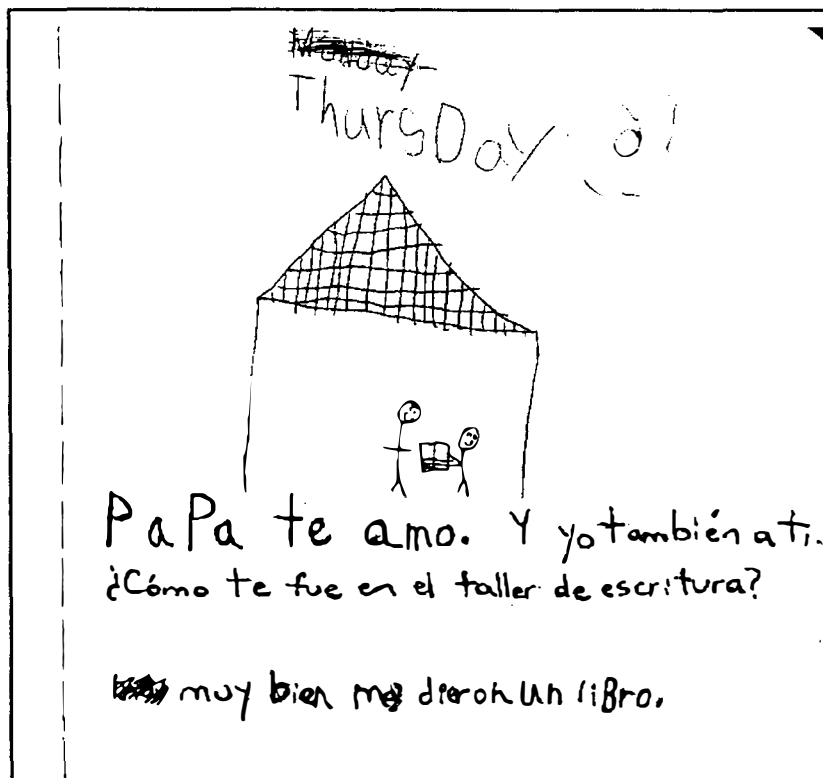
Figure 4-32. Adalbert's home writing, week two.

Adalbert: Papa I love you. Papa: And I also to you. How was your writing workshop? Adalbert: Very good. They gave me a book.

There are three things that stand out about this written exchange. First, even though his mother took him to the workshop everyday, his father wrote in the journal, indicating both parents' involvement in their children's literacy education. Second, the written message is one that could have orally taken place between Adalbert and his father. Rather than writing isolated questions back and forth, this exchange was used to learn more about the writing workshop. Third, the exchange was in Spanish, thus showing both of his parents' efforts to support Adalbert's Spanish literacy.
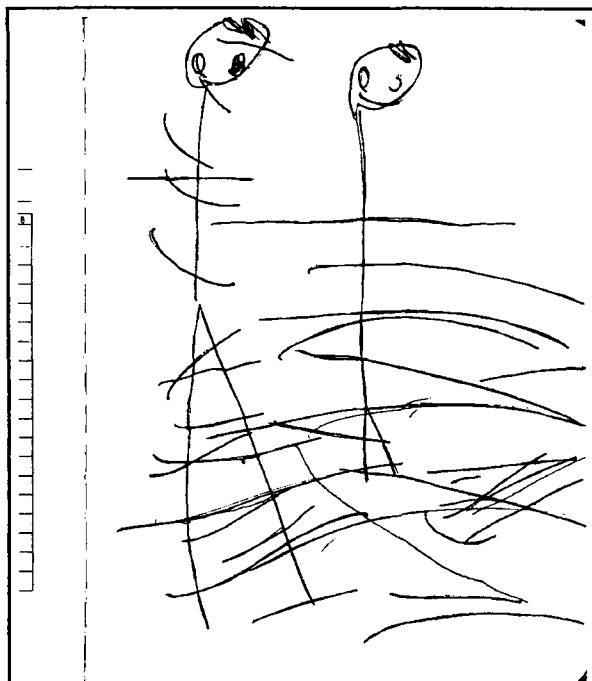
Alicia also wrote in her home journal.

Figure 4-33. Alicia's home journal.

While her parents did not write *to* her in the home journal, as they did with

Adalbert, Alicia still wrote. Alicia's home journal reflects what she did in the workshop;

she wrote what she could do by herself.

The Dominguez Family

Mrs. Dominguez and her husband were originally from Mexico. Both of her sons,

Justin, a rising kindergartner, and Kenny, approximately 18 months, were born in the

United States. Their first night at the workshop was the third night. They learned about

the workshop from Mr. Dominguez's sister, Mrs. Torres. Both parents were literate in

Spanish and speak bits and pieces of English. Mr. Dominguez came for the first two

nights and entertained their younger son, whereas the remaining sessions just Mrs.

Dominguez and her sons came.

An introduction to writing. Kenny was fascinated by his environment, as most toddlers his age are. Each evening at the workshop Kenny walked around, examining the room. Looking in bins of glue, turning over the basket of balls, taking books out of plastic bins, and playing with the toys I provided. If it was at his eye-level, he found a way to touch it. On his walk around the room one day, he saw Justin writing with his mother's help. This caught his attention, so he also sat down at the table. His mother gave him a piece of paper and a few markers. Mrs. Dominguez put her hand over his and then started writing his name on the paper, followed by a picture of a sun. Kenny then continued on own, filling the page with dots and squiggles, and insisting he put the markers' lids on, rather than his mother. Kenny was most perplexed by the markers. After looking at the marks on his paper, holding the marker in his hand, he turned and put the marker in his mouth. The picture of this moment and his writing sample are below.
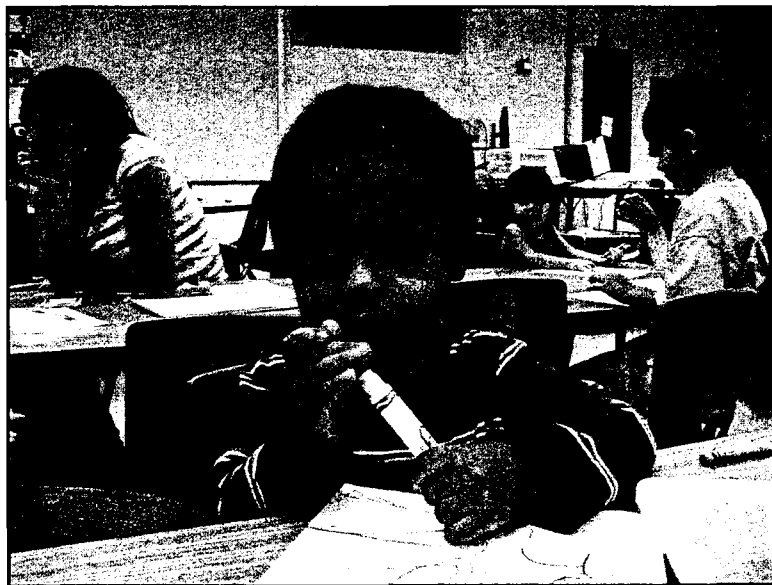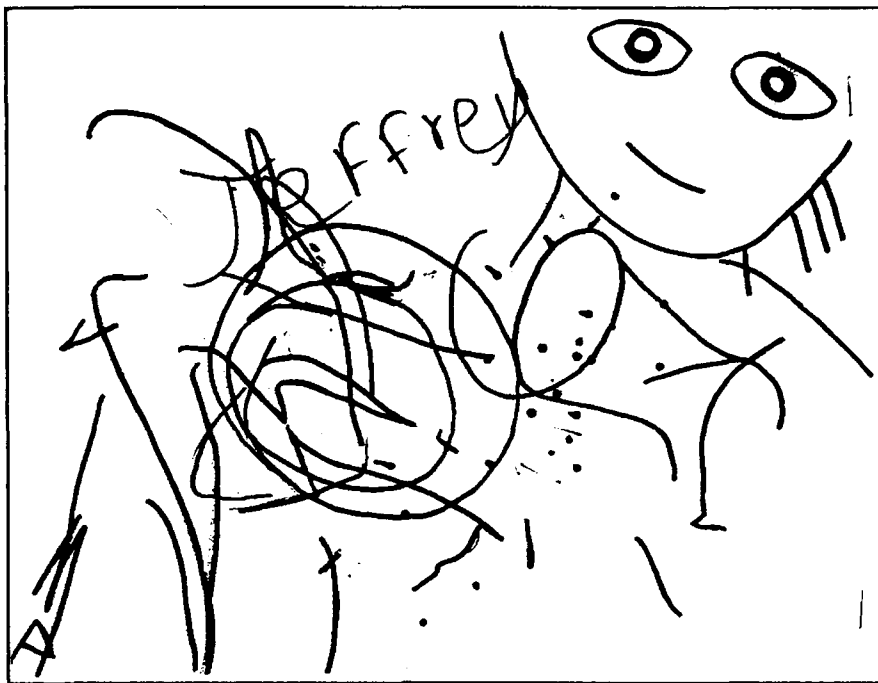

Figure 4-34. Kenny writing.

Figure 4-35. Kenny's sun picture.

Observing others, especially his brother, intrigued Kenny enough to decide to sit down

for a few minutes each day and write on a piece of paper. Through this social modeling,

Kenny was introduced to writing.

Fostering independence. In prekindergarten during the previous year Justin

participated in a writer's workshop and, thus, story-telling was very familiar to him.

Where he did not have the family background of telling stories, like the Galaches, he was

familiar with the concept of creating a story. Each of Justin's ideas came from something

around him. For example, on his first day of the workshop, I gave Justin and his mother

the finger-puppets we used on the first day. Justin, inspired by the pirate puppet he was

using, drafted an entire story about a pirate. As a writer, Justin drew the pictures, while

narrating the story. Figures 4-36 through 4-40 is the pirate story, with Justin's narration
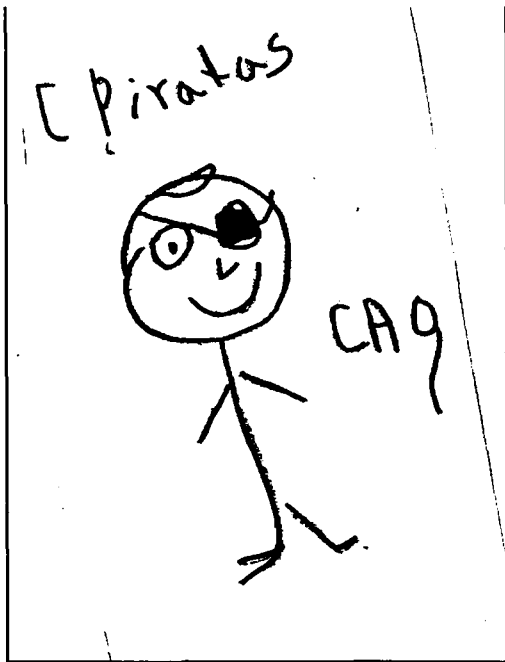
included. His mother wrote the Spanish words.

Figure 4-36. Justin's pirate's story, cover: "A pirate."

Figure 4-37. Justin's pirate story, page one: "Fighting the pirate."
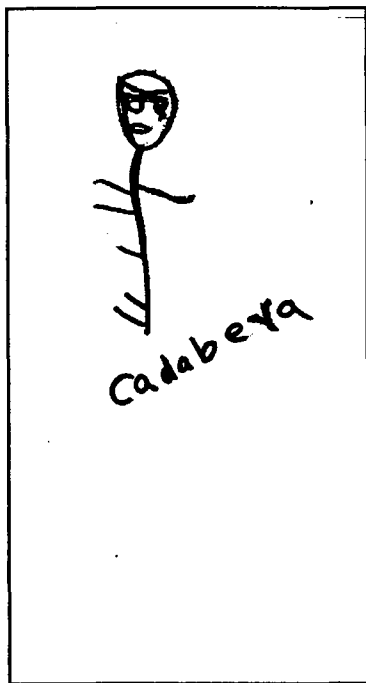
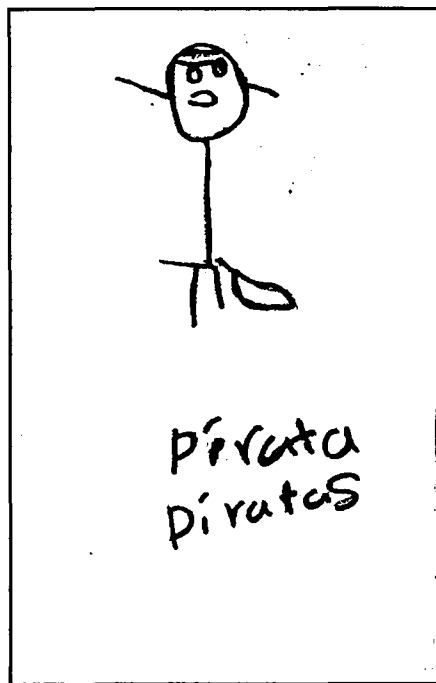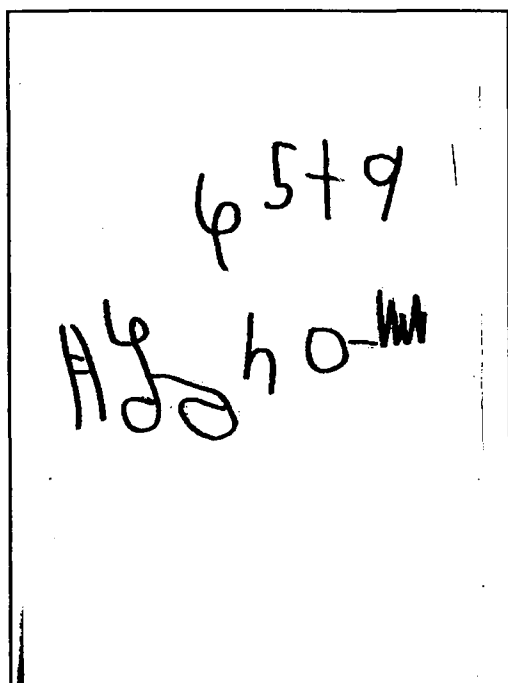*Figure 4-38.* Justin's pirate story, page two: "The skeleton."

Figure 4-39. Justin's pirate story, page three: "Mad."

Figure 4-40. Justin's pirate story, page four.

Justin's typical writing process consisted of choosing paper, then illustrating the story as he told about it. His mother was always involved in his last step: adding letters. He told his mother in Spanish: "I want to write, but don't know how," or, "I want to write, but can't." Mrs. Dominguez assisted Justin in writing words for his story. Sometimes this help consisted of her writing the Spanish word for the main action demonstrated on the page (as done in the Pirate story) or sometimes she would take his hand and write it with him. Other times, he wrote the beginning sound and she finished the rest of the word. She always insisted Justin write his name independently.

Justin was determined to write letters once his mother helped him. He diligently copied the words his mother wrote on scrap paper to his own book. He also used the picture dictionary or alphabet chart to copy selected letters or words. The counting book Justin published was an excellent collaboration between Mrs. Dominguez and Justin. While Justin chose the idea and determined what to write, he copied his mother's writing

to write words in his own book. She also assisted in helping him draw some of the more

complicated pictures.
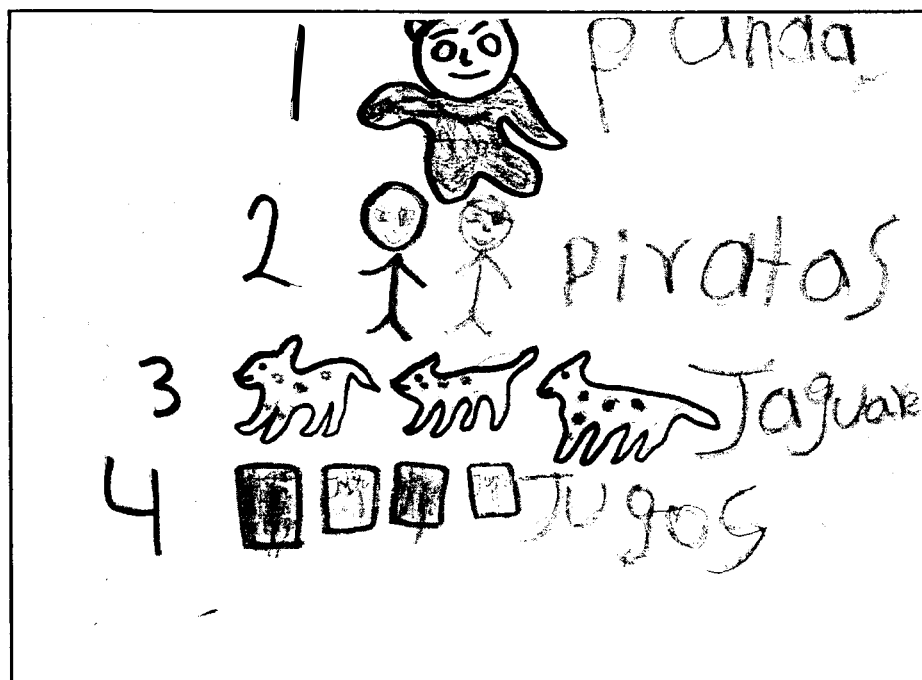
Figure 4-41. Justin counting book, page one.

The remainder of Justin's counting book was similar to page one. Mrs.

Dominguez encouraged Justin's book ideas and supported what he identified he wanted

help with. Figure 4-42 below is the last page of Justin's counting book, his favorite page.

Even though Mr. Potato Head does not follow the counting book pattern, Justin wanted to

add this page at the end. Mrs. Dominguez helped Justin draw him.
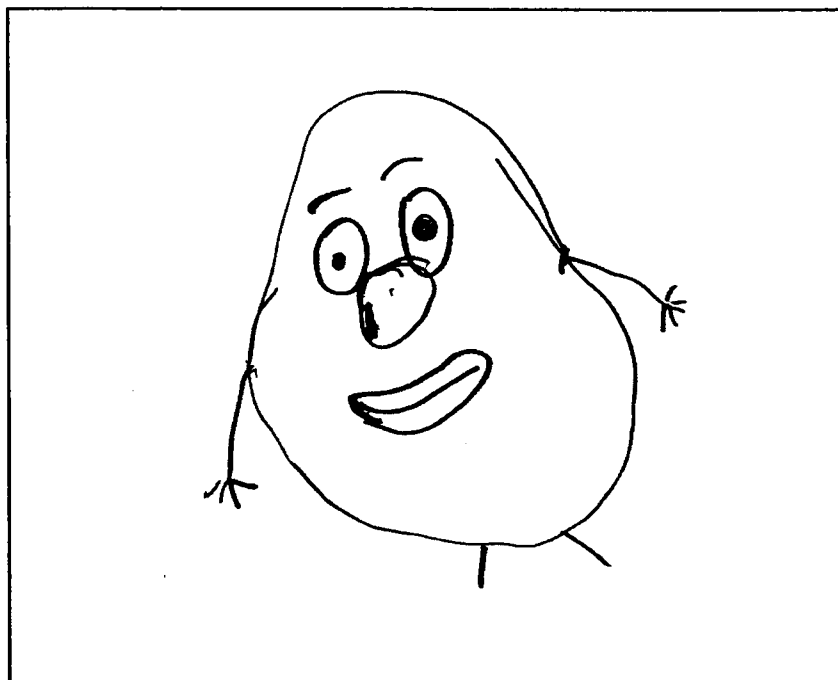
Figure 4-42. Justin's Mr. Potato Head

I asked Mrs. Dominguez what she thought Justin got out of the workshop, "He likes doing his letters more than he used to. He grabs anything and starts writing letters just like they are in the book. He used the picture dictionary. He finds the letters there and then does it himself."

Throughout the course of the workshop, Mrs. Dominguez assisted her children in what they wanted to write. In our final interview, she indicated she wished the workshop continued another week. She enjoyed learning how to "put books together," referring to the publishing process.

Writing at home. Justin used his home journal for a variety of purposes. Some pages consisted of his drawings and others were family writing. The family writing in the home journal corresponded to Mrs. Dominguez's actions during the workshop. In the workshop, while he was very outgoing with drawing and telling a story, he sought out his mother's help for making letters. Even though there were no instructions for over the first

weekend, Mrs. Dominguez wrote sentences for Justin to copy.
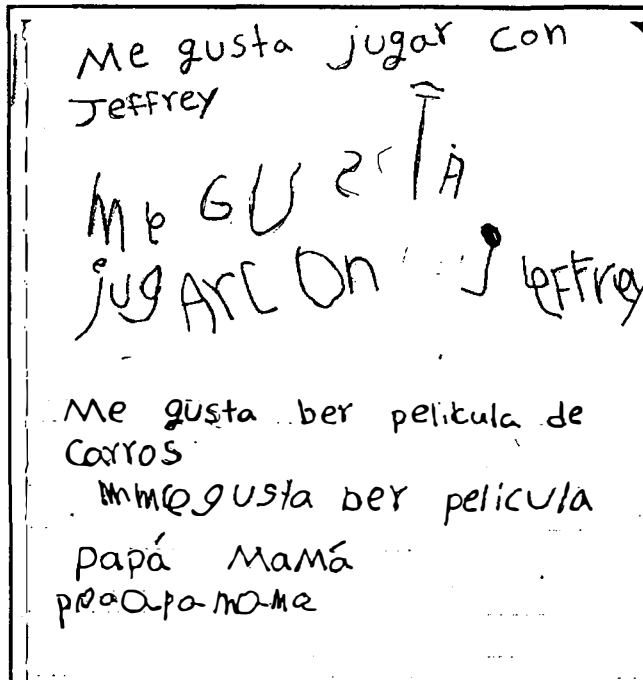
Figure 4-43. Justin's home journal, page one, week one.

Mrs. Dominguez: I like to play with Jeffrey.
Justin: I like to play with Jeffrey.
Mrs. Dominguez: I like car movies.
Justin: I like car movies.
Mrs. Dominguez: papa mama
Justin: papa mama

Over the second weekend, their writing became a conversation back and forth.

Figure 4-44. Justin's home journal, page one, week two.

Mrs. Dominguez: Good morning Justin.
Justin: Good morning mama.

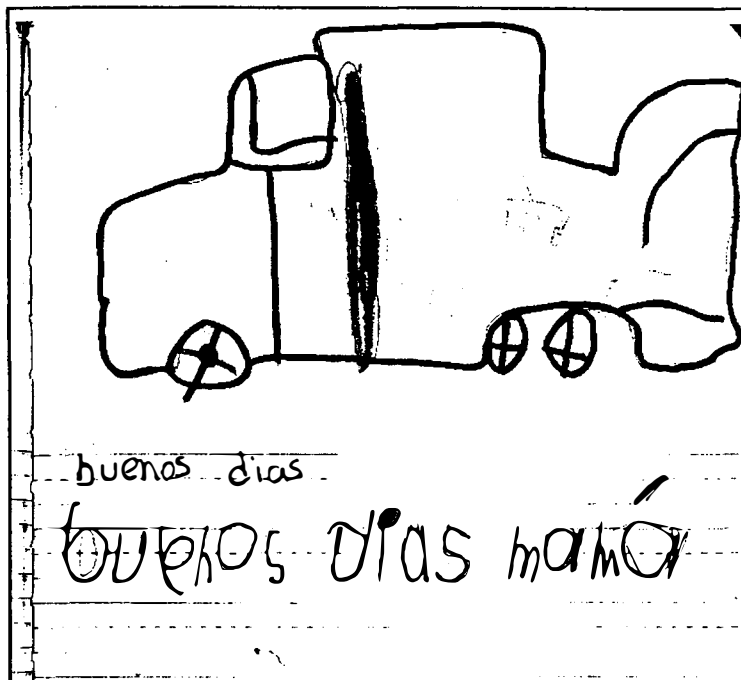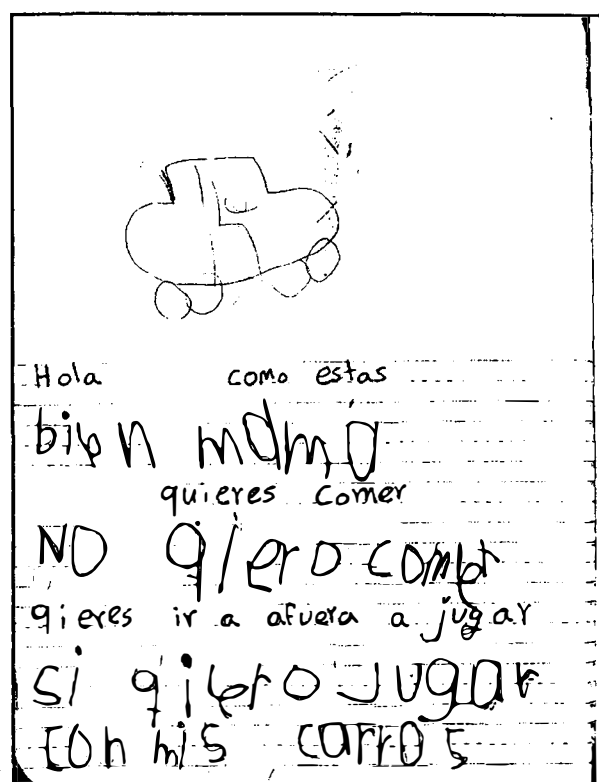*Figure 4-45.* Justin's home journal page two, week two.

Mrs. Dominguez: Hi Justin how are you?
Justin: Good mama.
Mrs. Dominguez: Justin, do you want to eat
Justin: I don't want to eat.
Mrs. Dominguez: Do you want to go out to play?
Justin: Yes I want to play with my cars.
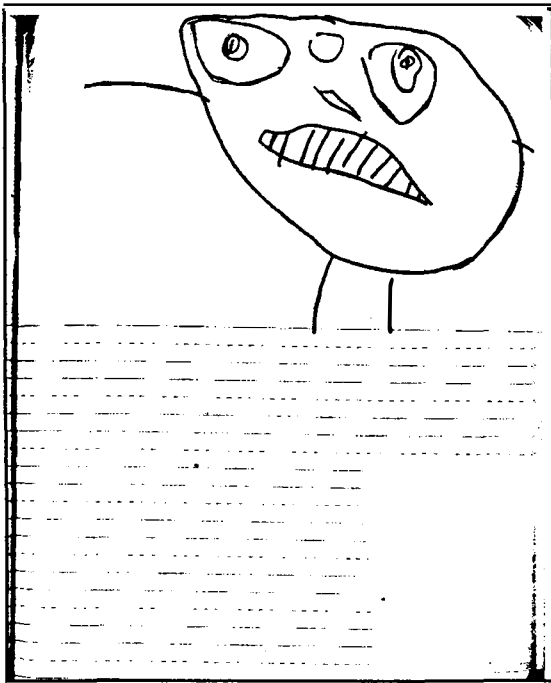
Figure 4-46. Justin's home journal, page three, week two, "watermelon."

In the Dominguez family home journal Mrs. Dominguez focused her efforts on Justin's interests and ability, which corresponded to her actions at the workshop. Over the first weekend, even though they were copied sentences, the subjects, cars and family members, directly pertained to Justin. These words were relevant to his everyday life. During the second weekend, Mrs. Dominguez followed my directions to "just write back and forth" with their child(ren). However, what is noteworthy was her word choice and semantics; both were relevant to Justin in regards to his interest and readiness level. Thus, Justin was able to write a conversation back-and-forth with his mother. Justin's drawing of the watermelon in Figure 4-46 demonstrates that Mrs. Dominguez allowed Justin to write independently, in addition to the joint writing, paralleling her actions at the workshop. In the home journal and throughout the workshop, Mrs. Dominguez facilitated Justin's Spanish language skills and his confidence and interest in being a writer.

The Torres Family

Mrs. Torres and Mrs. Dominguez were sisters-in-law. Like Mrs. Dominguez, she was literate in Spanish and spoke only a few words of English. Her oldest daughter, Michelle, finished kindergarten and speaks both Spanish and English, and was an emergent reader and writer in English. Her middle daughter, Andrea, was three years old, spoke Spanish, and a few words of English. The youngest daughter, Claritza, was 18-months old and sometimes accompanied her mother and sisters to the workshop. The workshop was an incredibly fulfilling experience for Mrs. Torres, Michelle, and Andrea, and I will illustrate that with two intertwining experiences: an opportunity to learn and gaining confidence. Even though there is lots of overlap, "An Opportunity to Learn" and "Gaining Confidence" are presented separately. Then "A New Writer" demonstrates how the workshop combined these two elements to allow Michelle to grow into a writer.

An opportunity to learn. Each day a cab picked up the Dominguez family so they could attend the writing workshop. Mr. Dominguez worked any available overtime with his construction job, often resulting in long hours. With one family vehicle, to get places the Dominguez family either went around the father's work schedule, or they did not go. Prior to starting the workshop, the parent coordinator at Michelle's school informed me Mrs. Dominguez financially sacrificed to support her children in school. This workshop proved to be an excellent opportunity for her three daughters to learn. Mrs. Torres was very involved with her children's learning at the workshop. For example, she sat with her 18-month old daughter, Claritza, on her lap during our "Say Hello" period. She clapped Claritza's hands to the syllables, too. Mrs. Torres wanted her daughters to have as many opportunities as they could to learn.

Incredibly petite and soft-spoken, some might misjudge Andrea. However, at three years old, Andrea showed, no matter how small, everyone has something to say when given the chance. At the start of the three-week workshop, she was timid and stayed close to her mother. There were brief crying episodes during the "Say Hello" and sharing time. Yet, despite her shyness, Andrea would tell stories, write, and share just like all of the other participants. Her stories covered a range of topics from her family to stars.

Andrea had a consistent independent writing routine: select a pre-stapled book, sit down, and with marker in hand, begin drawing. As she drew, she narrated her story. A couple days into the workshop, she selected a large, plain white book. With a red marker in hand, she began, saying "beep, beep" as she drew. Jane, the translator, asked what she is drawing. As she drew, she narrated her story in Spanish.

Andrea: Beep! Beep! And this is a truck that goes to the fire…and this is the hose…and this is the thing that you wrap the hose around.
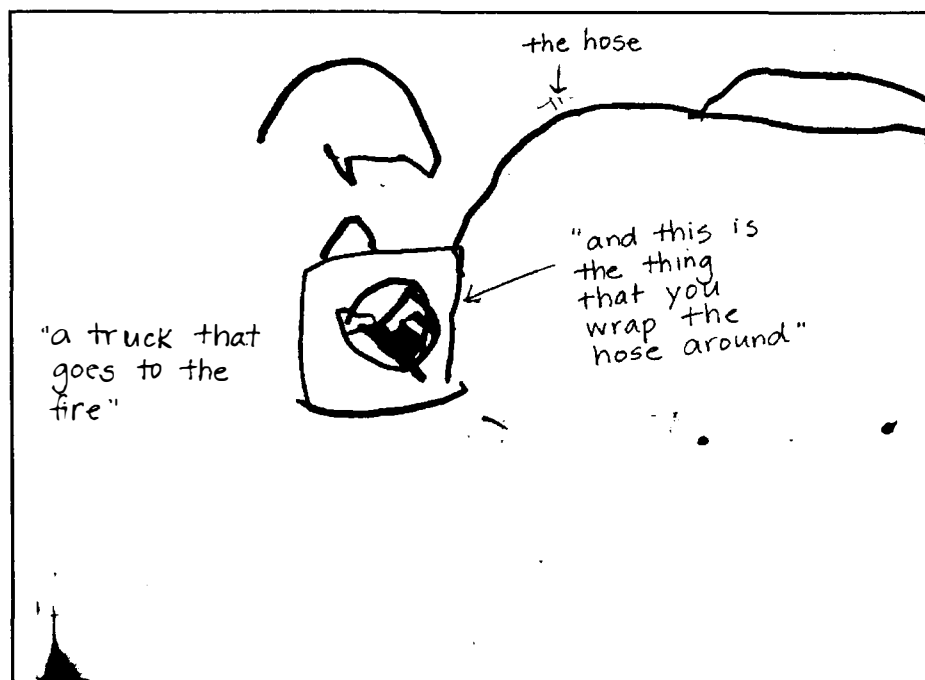
Figure 4-47. Andrea's fire truck.

Andrea knew her pictures conveyed meaning and her job was to share that meaning with others. Andrea came everyday and wrote something. Sometimes she wrote for a minute or two before going off to play, but she always wrote and shared. Mrs. Torres let Andrea decide how much she would write, but for the publishing party, Mrs. Torres sat with Andrea and helped her put together a book. As Mrs. Torres and Andrea finished gluing letters on the cover, Mrs. Torres told Jane, the translator: "The workshop has benefited her. Before she cried and didn't want to do anything. Now she does. She's progressed." In our final interview, she restated, "Andrea benefited from the social aspect of the workshop and being with the other children." Mrs. Torres relayed to me she had tried to get Andrea enrolled in the public school preschool, but it was full at this point.

As Mrs. Torres recognized, though, this workshop was a valuable learning experience for Andrea. She grew with her social development. She could sit in front of children, some twice her age (and height), and share a book in Spanish—a language not everyone in the group spoke. She also established a solid literacy foundation from which to build: she knew what books were and that she could write and read them. Ultimately, she was learning transferable concepts and gaining confidence for when she would enter an English-speaking school system.

Gaining confidence. When I first met Mrs. Torres's oldest daughter, Michelle, as a classroom researcher in her kindergarten classroom, she was reserved with writing. While she was normally a very outgoing girl, when it came to writing, especially sharing, it was a series of "I no want to," or, "You read it." Even though she wrote everyday in English, Michelle lacked confidence in reading her own words back. While her mind operated in Spanish, she wrote in English. For her, there was never a connection between the languages. At the workshop's start, she preferred using Spanish, except in her interaction with the whole group and myself. As the workshop progressed, though, she began to both write and share in English. My personal highlight of the writing workshop was seeing how far Michelle had grown in her self-assurance; each day she eagerly shared. Our particular writing workshop allowed Michelle to gain confidence not only as a writer, but a writer and reader in two languages.

Being able to participate. Confidence was gained by having a writing workshop structure that encouraged participants to participate in ways not afforded to Michelle in her previous writing workshop. During our first workshop, I passed out finger puppets and Michelle and Mrs. Torres sat together and told a story in Spanish. When we came

back together to share stories, Michelle and Mrs. Torres shared their story, telling most of it in Spanish. Mrs. Torres did use a few words in English by saying, "I am a unicorn."

When writing time began, Michelle chose her paper, and sat next to her mother and announced: "The story of the fairy and the horse." (Her puppet characters.) Her mom wrote this in Spanish and then I asked Michelle what happens in her story. In both Spanish and English she said, "They became friends and then that's it." "Ok," I replied, "well, how did they become friends?" As I listened to Michelle elaborate her story, I responded: "That's great! How about putting that in your story?" And so she did.

Michelle then told the story in both Spanish and English, as her mom and Jane, the translator, wrote. When Michelle finished telling the story, she illustrated it. I came over to see the finished product. When I asked her to read it, Michelle had Jane read it— in both Spanish and English. As we listened, I pointed out to Michelle how I saw the story in her pictures, too. During the whole group share at the end, Michelle "read" her story in English. While she may misread over individual words, her meaning came out crystal clear.

Encouraging families to tell stories in any language and providing a translator allowed both Michelle and Mrs. Torres to fully participate in the writing workshop, in turn, helping each person gain confidence. For Michelle, she gained confidence in using English. She used the language she felt comfortable with to tell a story, hear it read back to her in both languages, and then read the story in her non-dominant language, English. This experience provided Michelle with the connection she needed between Spanish and English. For Mrs. Torres it was an empowering experience in which she was able to help her daughters.

In our final interview, I asked Mrs. Torres what was helpful about the workshop, "I had taken classes just for me and Michelle had done a summer school program, not together—just separate. As parents we could participate in the group...I would like to learn English so I can help them [her children] because right now I have to ask if it is correct or not." Through the summer writing workshop, she could help her children and did not have to ask if it was correct or not because she could use Spanish, thus being a full participator in not only the workshop, but also her daughters' learning.

Writing a personal note. In answering my question about how the workshop was helpful for Michelle, Mrs. Torres replied, "Each day she would say, 'Let's go continue my story'. It pushed her to write." I also saw this change in Michelle. On the last day of the workshop she brought in a thank-you book for me, written in both Spanish and English. Figure 4-48 is the cover from her thank you book.
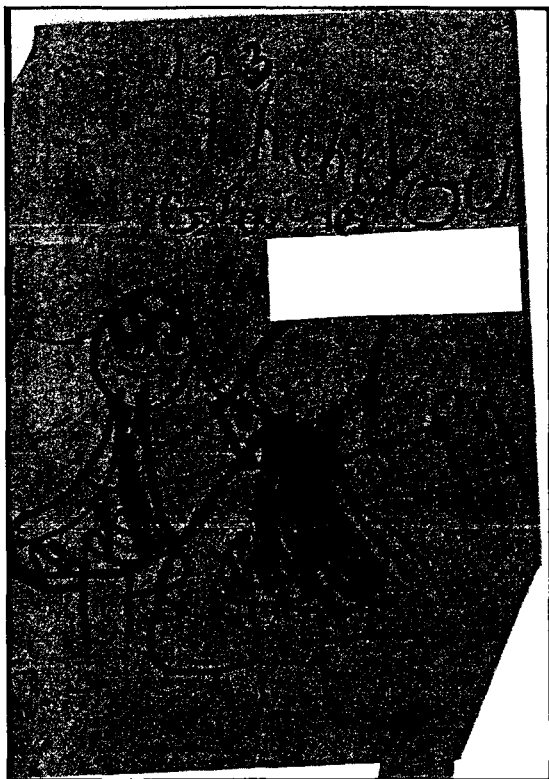
Figure 4-48. Michelle's thank you book.

As I looked through the book, astonished at what I saw, Michelle said, "My mom help me." This amazed me even more. In this gesture, Michelle had internalized being a writer. Writing was no longer something the teacher made her do. Rather, writing was to her both enjoyable and purposeful. Most importantly, she and her mother chose to do it at home—showing this family, as a result of the workshop, writes together.

A new writer: Michelle. For Michelle, the workshop was an opportunity to learn because she had the opportunity to use her native language when developing her story idea. Additionally, she and her mother learned spelling strategies that Michelle then used to write in English. In doing both of these things, she gained confidence in her use of the English language and this contributed to Michelle's emergence as a new, confident writer.

During the first week of the workshop, Michelle had her mom write for her in Spanish. On the second and third day, I worked with her on listening to the English sounds so she could use invented spelling. However, during both times she told me, "I no want to. Too hard. I want my mom to help me." Then, Michelle went back to writing with her mother.

The second week Michelle used a combination of Spanish and English in her writing. In her book "Fireworks" she used both Spanish and English to create a book. Figure 4-49 is a page from this book in which she asked her mother write in Spanish at the top and then Michelle wrote words in English at the bottom.
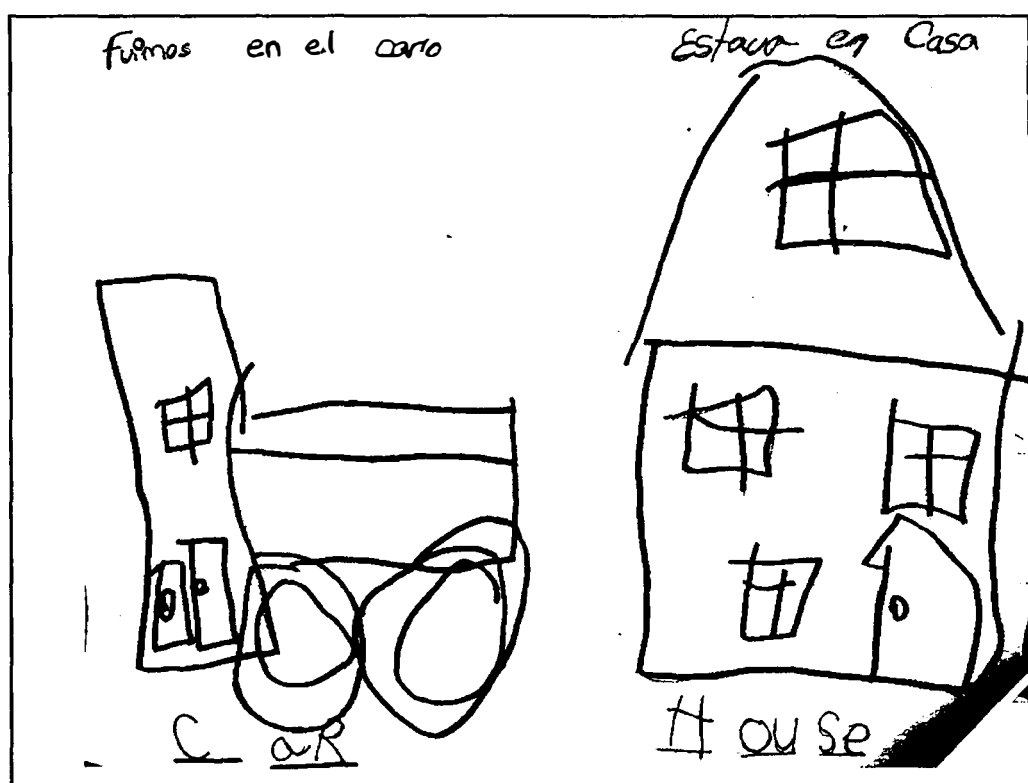
Figure 4-49. Michelle's fireworks book, page one.

Finally, in the workshop's third week, she wrote mainly in English. Initially, they were not as elaborate as her Spanish stories, but a solid story structure was still present.

To spell she did two things: 1) used spelling strategies I taught her and her mom, or 2) her mom asked the translator how to spell words they could not figure out using the spelling strategies. A page from her published book entitled "Princess" is below.
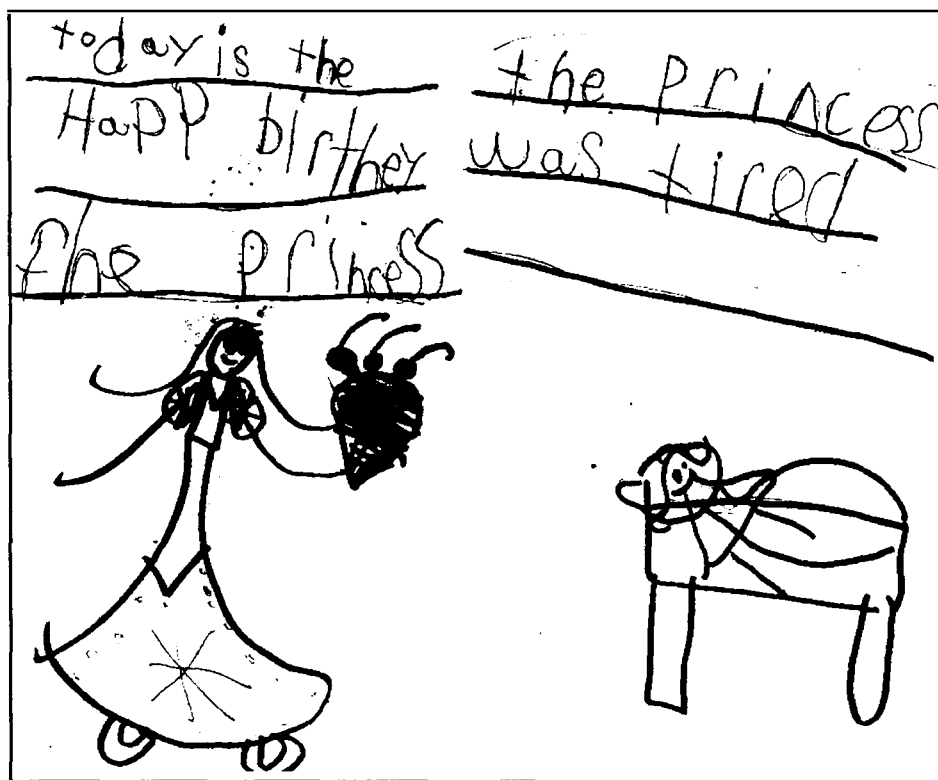
Figure 4-50. Michelle's Princess book, page one.

Left page: Today is the happy birthday the princess.
Right page: The princess was tired.

Throughout the workshop, Michelle became a confident writer of both languages, and this was amazing to witness because during the school year, she struggled with her perception of her capability to write. While the workshop's set-up was beneficial to Michelle's growth, Mrs. Torres's assistance was crucial to Michelle's surfacing of a self-assured writer. Throughout the three weeks, Michelle sought her mother's help quite often throughout the workshop, and in our interview, I asked Michelle if she liked writing by herself. "No," she replied, "I like writing with my mom but someone help me..." The

writing workshop provided Michelle an opportunity with the language and social support she needed to grow in her self-efficacy as a writer.

Sibling interaction. Andrea, the youngest regular workshop participant, shared her oral stories and writing with the group quite often. For example, she would sit in the Share Chair, hold up her book, turn pages, and mumble a few undetectable words. Most times, Michelle came to her side, insisting she "help her because she can't talk." I always responded with: "She can, so let her do it first," but Michelle always stayed and Andrea never appeared discouraged by Michelle's presence. On the second day of the workshop, I asked the children to bring in a toy. Andrea brought in a toy, and like everyone else, sat in the Share Chair to tell about it.

Michelle: I will help her because she can't talk.

Me: She can talk, so let her try.

Andrea pulls a red rectangle out her bag, shows it to the group, and mumbles something that is undetectable.

Michelle: She likes her camera.

Me: Where is it from?

Michelle: from Wal-mart. She likes *Cars* (referring to the movie).

Miatta: Does she play with it everyday?

Michelle: Yes.

Victoria: I like the color.

Michelle: She likes red.

When Andrea would speak in Spanish to her mother, the translator, or her sister, she was easily understood, even with her quiet voice. However, in the Share Chair, it was difficult for others to hear what she was saying. Perhaps, Andrea knew she did not speak

the language others spoke in the Share Chair. Michelle's help, though, allowed everyone to hear Andrea's stories, and more importantly—as this example demonstrates—respond to her.

Writing at home. Mrs. Torres used her daughters' home journals as a teaching tool. In the two different weeks home journals were used, Michelle and Andrea's notebooks were used for teaching Spanish sounds and for journaling. When handing out the home journals for the first week, my instructions were they are written in. During this first week, Mrs. Torres used the journal as a way make the reading and writing connection to teach Spanish sounds to both her daughters. She wrote the letters that represented the Spanish vowels at the top of both her daughters' pages and expected both to write.
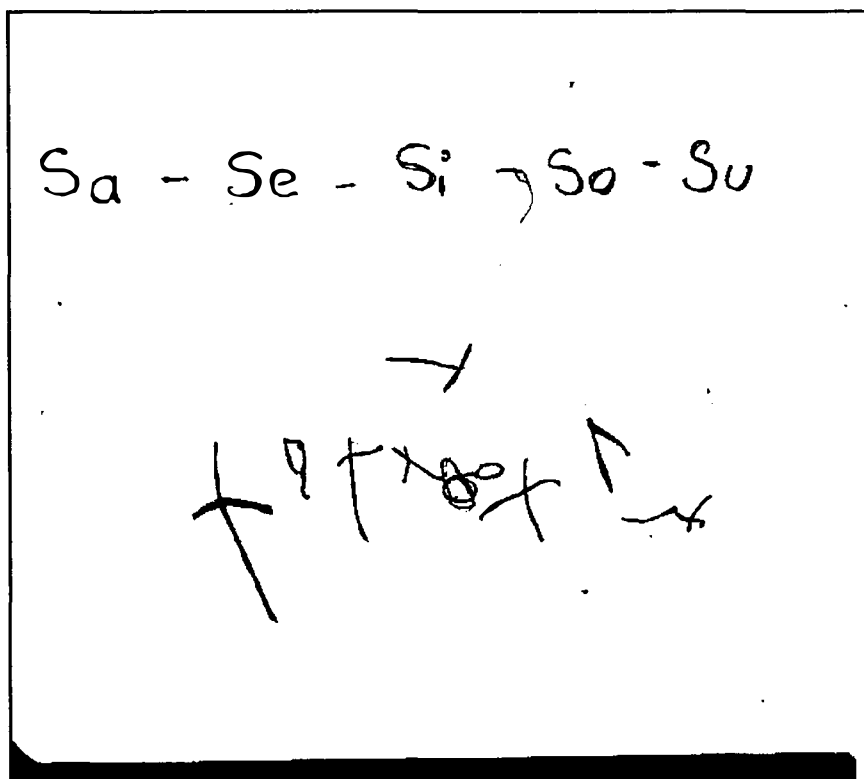
Figure 4-51. Andrea's home journal, week two.
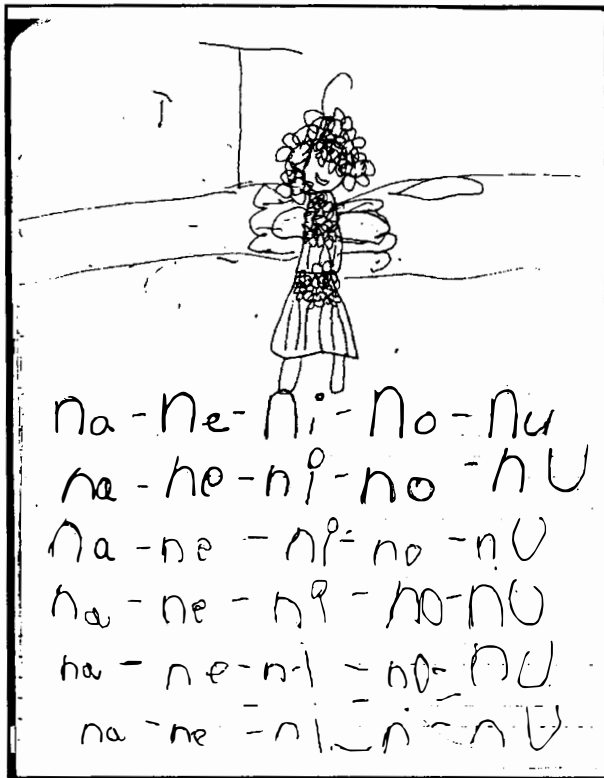
Figure 4-52. Michelle's home journal, week two.

Figure 4-53 is a piece Mrs. Torres wrote in Michelle's home journal during the second week. She used this opportunity to write a special note to Michelle.

es una niña

linda es muy capas

de haces Sus cosas

Con mucha Seguridad

Es mi hija y la quiero

Mucho es Unica
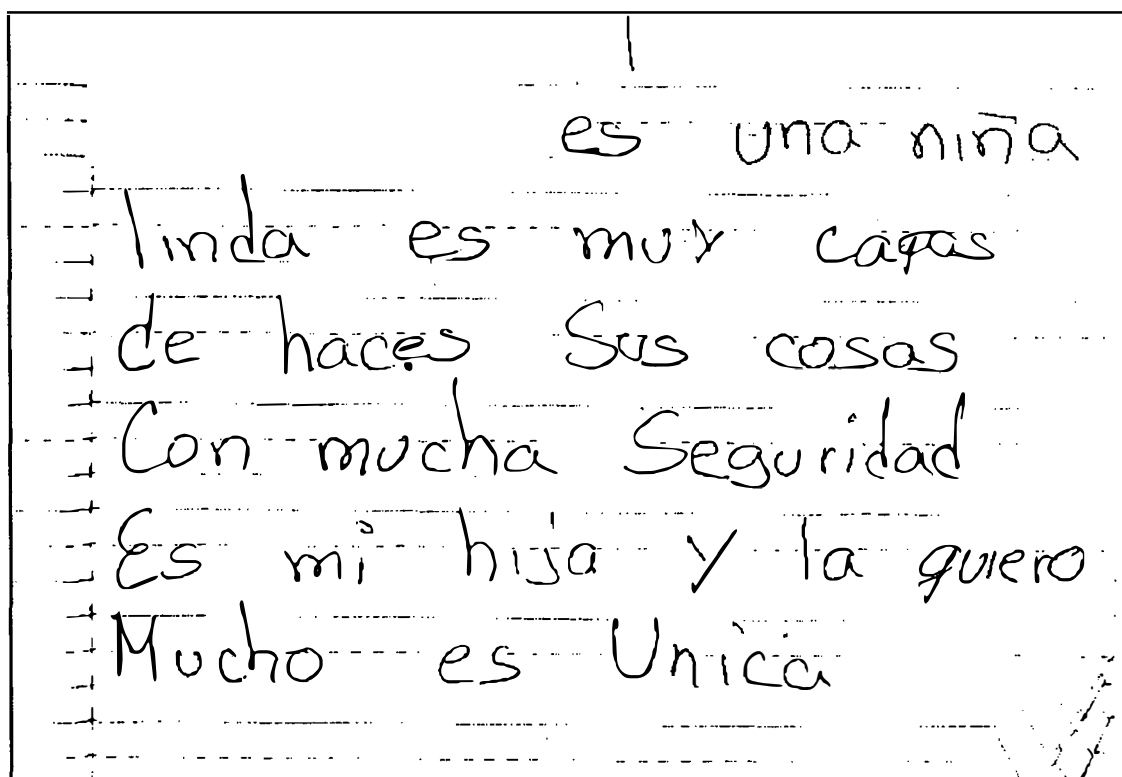
Figure 4-53. Mrs. Torres's message to Michelle in her home journal, week two.

Michelle is a lovely girl. She is very capable of doing things very confidently. She is my daughter and I love her dearly. She is unique.

What notably stands out is Mrs. Torres's use of Spanish in both entries. She viewed herself as a teacher to her daughters and did not have to use English in order to do this.

Bringing the Families Together: The Findings

Three findings pertaining to ELL family involvement were learned from analyzing the data pertaining to each family and then the families collectively. While each of the findings are separate, the findings relate and build upon one another to provide direction in the field of ELL family engagement.

Finding one: Involvement varies. Reading through the five families' stories, what resonates is how different each family's experience was. Throughout the duration of the workshop, each evening when I would type up the notes I struggled because I was looking for a similarity on how parents supported their children. When I revisited my data after the workshop's conclusion, I realized the unrealistic nature of the assumption I was earlier operating under: family involvement was going to look the same because all families were in the same writing workshop context. Through this realization I saw my data in an enlightening, new way: there will not be a common thread across the involvement behavior because family involvement manifests itself differently for each family.

Epstein's (1995, 2002) framework of family involvement identifies six different types of involvement: basic care; communication; volunteering; learning at home; decision making; and community collaboration. When applying her framework to a school-wide level, it means having opportunities for involvement at each of these levels. I assumed since this workshop addressed learning at home—parent education—by having families be in the same context, involvement levels would be similar. Yet, this workshop showed even in the same experience, involvement *will* be different.

The two African families were different from each other. For the Dono family, involvement meant bringing the children to the workshop each evening and writing with them at home, as demonstrated by the children's attendance each evening and their use of home journals. Mr. Dono knew additional learning opportunities for his children were important so he made sure they could attend. With the Jackson family, involvement initially meant agreeing after the suggestion of a family friend to let their children be

picked up by a stranger and taken to a writing workshop. Then, as the workshop continued, involvement became Mrs. Johnson attending the workshop with her daughters and learning how to help them spell.

With the three Hispanic families, there was a more similar perception of what involvement meant. For the three mothers, when the workshop began, it meant being present and actively participating in each workshop. As the workshop progressed, as voiced in their interviews, they learned strategies for helping their children with writing. Involvement became seeking out, trusting, and applying my suggestions with how to support their children. More importantly, for Mrs. Dominguez and Mrs. Torres, involvement meant being able to use Spanish to help their children's literacy development.

Overall, while involvement in the writing workshop context varied for each family, what did not vary was the outcome: each child was a published, successful writer.

Finding two: Investment is essential. Mr. Dono, Mrs. Jackson, and the three Hispanic mothers demonstrated various investment levels in their participation at the workshop. As shown by Mr. Dono's sporadic attendance, while he valued his children's presence at the workshop, his actions implied he did not realize the potential of his involvement in the actual workshop. He could have learned additional ways to support his children, but something impacted his decision to attend only briefly. His decision to be involved in the manner he chose, which translates into his investment, is data I would liked to have gathered in a post interview, but I was not able to this.

Mrs. Jackson initially did not appear to realize the possible importance of her presence at the workshop. Only after she came and experienced the workshop,

particularly spelling strategies, did she see the workshop as worthwhile. At that time, her investment changed; her involvement increased.

Contrasting to Mr. Dono and Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Torres, Mrs. Dominguez, and Mrs. Galache attended each workshop and actively participated. They appeared to be deeply invested. At the conclusion of the workshop, they shared how much they learned, referencing mini-lessons, as well as describing their children's growth as a result of the workshop.

The five families' various levels of investment show that in order to give high priority to involvement in family literacy programs, parents must see value in and be invested in the programs' purpose. Ultimately, investment increases involvement.

Finding three: Parents are teachers. The five families represented tremendously diverse backgrounds. Regardless of their involvement and investment, the factor that linked these families together was that as parents, they were teachers. Each child sought out his or her parent's help and valued his or her presence. Each parent, in return, provided help.

CHAPTER 5

Findings: What I Did to Facilitate The Workshop

While each family had a story, the workshop itself had a story as to what happened each day to answer the question: What did I do as the facilitator to make the workshop a successful, engaging experience for each of the families? Chapter 5 will be my findings that answer this question, related to the workshop as a whole. This finding is presented in narrative vignettes, supported through writing samples and interviews to explain families' experiences in the workshop. Also, the vignettes show the one main thing I did as facilitator to make the workshop successful. What connects the story of the workshop is my intentionality behind each decision. One finding and two-findings pertaining to the workshop emerged from the data:

1. I facilitated with authenticity

   a. I began with the writers.

   b. I valued the children's voices.

Lindfors (2008) writes extensively on the importance of authenticity for young writers. As a facilitator, I worked under this principle in beginning with the writer and valuing voices in order to set-up young, ELL children to flourish as writers. Using authenticity as my guide allowed me to implement a successful workshop for these five families. My findings show facilitating with authenticity, particularly with beginning where the writers were and valuing voices is imperative for young, ELL writers.

I Began with the Writers

While the focus of the workshop was on family writing, my workshop plan was based on what is known about early childhood writers. By beginning where the writers were, children were successful as writers. My decisions regarding mini-lessons and writing topics impacted the children's growth as writers.

Observing families writing together: Decisions with mini-lessons. As described in Chapter 4, all parents were teachers. The four mothers—Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Galache, Mrs. Dominguez, and Mrs. Torres—all stated it was helpful learning ways to help their children, especially with spelling. During the summer workshop, I determined the mini-lessons by watching how the families worked together as writers. One behavior I observed was the desire to spell. On a couple different evenings, I did mini-lessons on spelling strategies. On each evening, both the children and parents sat in a circle and I showed them a strategy to help with spelling. For example, on one evening I used a picture alphabet chart. This would help young writers with making the association between the sound and letter.

On another evening I taught a mini-lesson on using picture dictionaries. I gave each family a picture dictionary put together with a folder and print-outs I found on A to Z.com. I chose this particular dictionary because on one side of the page were words that began with a letter, and the other side was blank—allowing family members to write their own words. During our mini-lesson I modeled to family members how we can use this to help us with writing. Each child received a copy of an alphabet chart and picture dictionary to keep.

As I walked around the workshop those days, picture dictionaries were wide open and alphabet charts were being pointed to and referenced. Michelle used the picture dictionary to find the word "princess," a topic she wrote frequently about. Some families added Spanish words to picture dictionaries. While family members used these for spelling, I also observed Mrs. Dominguez and Mrs. Torres pointing to the actual letter to show their children how a certain letter was made, as shown in the picture below. Since the workshop's end, Mrs. Torres said Michelle regularly uses her picture dictionary, often asking how she is going to make a story from the words on this page.

Figure 5-1. Justin using the alphabet chart and picture dictionary.

As a facilitator, I found, as I predicted, it was possible to determine the need for particular mini-lessons by observing the families writing together and by addressing those needs via specific mini lessons I designed with these families in mind. The parents and children benefited when I was exact in my mini-lessons on providing spelling help. In addition, providing family members with concrete tools allowed them to be teachers to their children and even continue the learning at home. Providing detailed ways by which they could help their children allowed parents to implement these suggestions with their

children, thus increasing the amount of "helping" verses "telling." Mini-lessons created by focusing on families as writers were essential for these ELL writers because: 1) this led the families to be invested in the mini-lessons because they provided information they valued, and 2) family members learned ways to support their children's writing without having to be fluent in English.

Gathering writing ideas: Finding something from around you. All children, regardless of age or language background, indeed are writers when they are shown how to take the stories they know and use those as writing ideas. Oral stories can be used as an entry point for writers because all children begin with telling stories (Horn & Giacobbe, 2007). As a facilitator, I used the stories participants told about their interests and common experiences to enable the children to transfer those words into elaborate written stories. By tapping into the writers' entry points (Glover, 2009) I enabled ELL children to become writers.

Writing about something you know: Justin's favorites. Justin's interests were easily detected from examining his writing from the workshop. His favorite topic to write about was Kung Fu Panda, the character from a recent Disney movie. During one workshop, he selected a pre-stapled book and wrote all about Kung Fu Panda. He wrote his inside pages first, and then dictated to his mother the title. When I asked him read it to me at the table, he pointed to each word as he read. Page One: Kung Fu Panda. Page Two: Chewy Kung Fu Panda. Page Three: fireworks. When he shared his book to the group, though, his words changed, elaborating more on detail, yet his main character remained the same.

Figure 5-2. Justin's cover: "I like the panda."

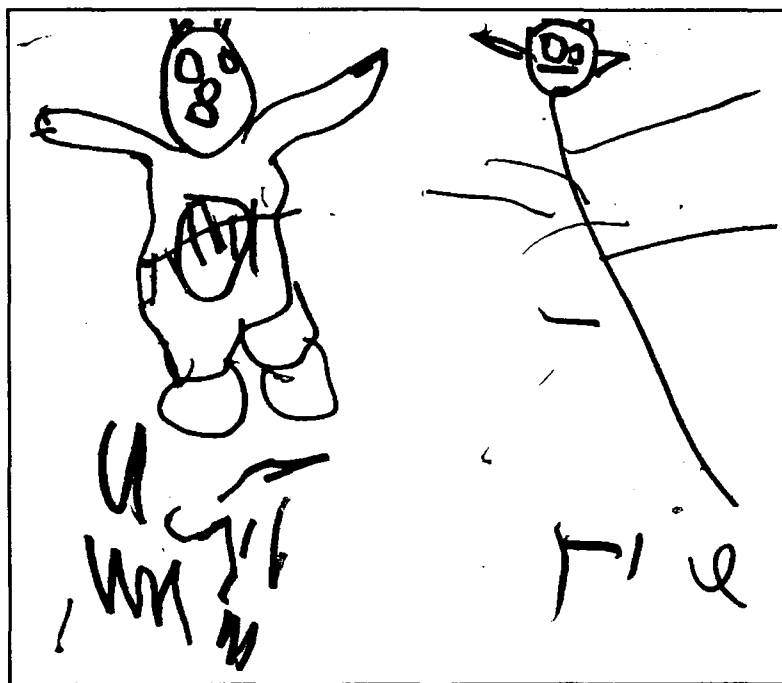Justin: Kung Fu Panda. It's an imaginary story.

Figure 5-3. Justin's panda story, page one.

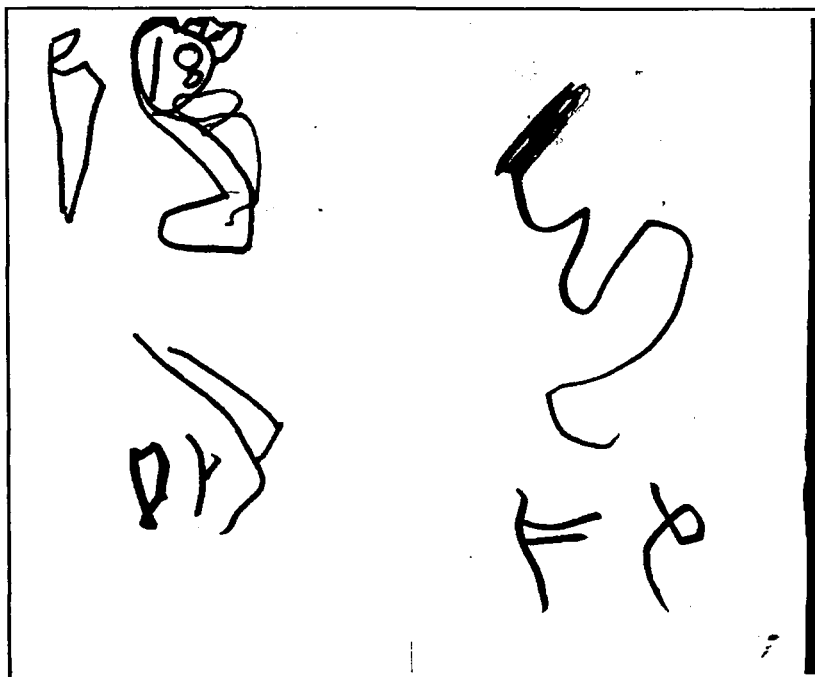Justin: Kung Fu Panda. Somebody lost my things.

Figure 5-4. Justin's panda story, page two.

Justin: And they went furious. Loud noise.

Figure 5-5. Justin's panda story, page three.

Justin: Loud noise. He died.

While he did not read the word *fen* aloud, it was his Spanish attempt of the word 'fin,' meaning "end." Justin's book and the process he used to write shows a great deal about this young writer. He told the story of a single topic—Kung Fu Panda, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Justin also revised to add more details to his story when he shared it to the whole group. Finally, Justin clarified his story. After hearing Kung Fu Panda died, I exclaimed: "He died?!" Justin looked up and matter of factly said, "It's other story Kung Fu Panda." His clarification and response meant he was making a different story of Kung Fu Panda than presented in the movie.

Justin showed when ELL writers begin with the familiar they can engage in the writing process and create an elaborate story, regardless of language. As a facilitator, I deliberately chose to leave the forum for writing ideas open to encourage children's various creativity and interests. By beginning with what the writers already knew, all participants in the workshop were able to be writers.

A common experience provides everyone with a story. The Fourth of July occurred between the first and second weeks of the workshop. When we returned for the first time after the Fourth, I shared a story about what I did over the weekend. As I held up the book I had written, I asked the children how I could tell more about my weekend. I received lots of suggestions: Victoria asked where I went on the plane; Korlu asked why the fireworks were canceled; and Adalbert asked what presents I got at the baby shower.

I paired the children and had them tell stories about a weekend—it could be the past weekend or any weekend. Everyone, not surprisingly, told stories about the Fourth of July.

After we told oral stories in partners, the children came to the share chair to tell everyone. When Alicia sat down, she shared her story about the fireworks: "fireworks and cover ears"…."and lots of colors." (Adalbert then whispered something.) "and then I swim all by myself." When she began writing for the day, I asked her what she was writing about and she said, "The start of the fireworks….it was dark." As she continued, simultaneously as she drew and wrote, she told her story. Below is the book Alicia wrote about going to the fireworks with her family, and what she read when she shared the story.
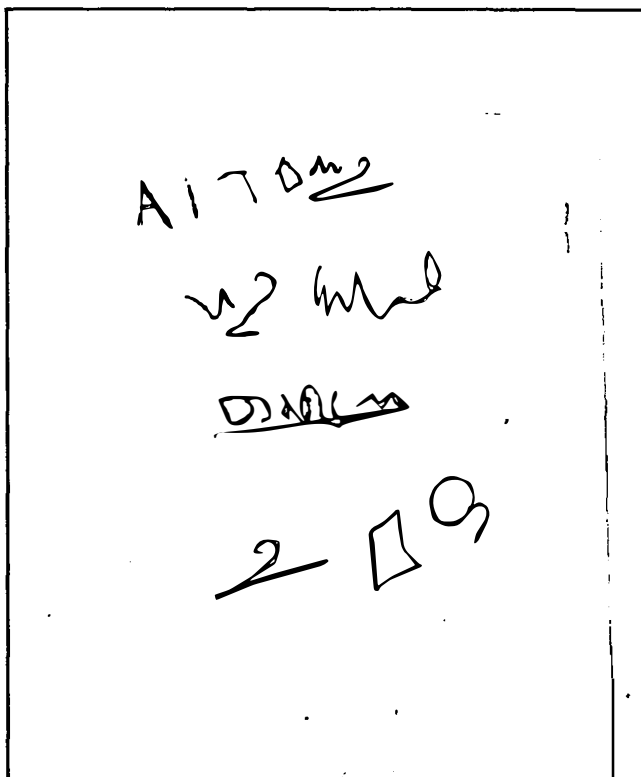
Figure 5-6. Alicia's fireworks cover.

"I was at the fireworks."
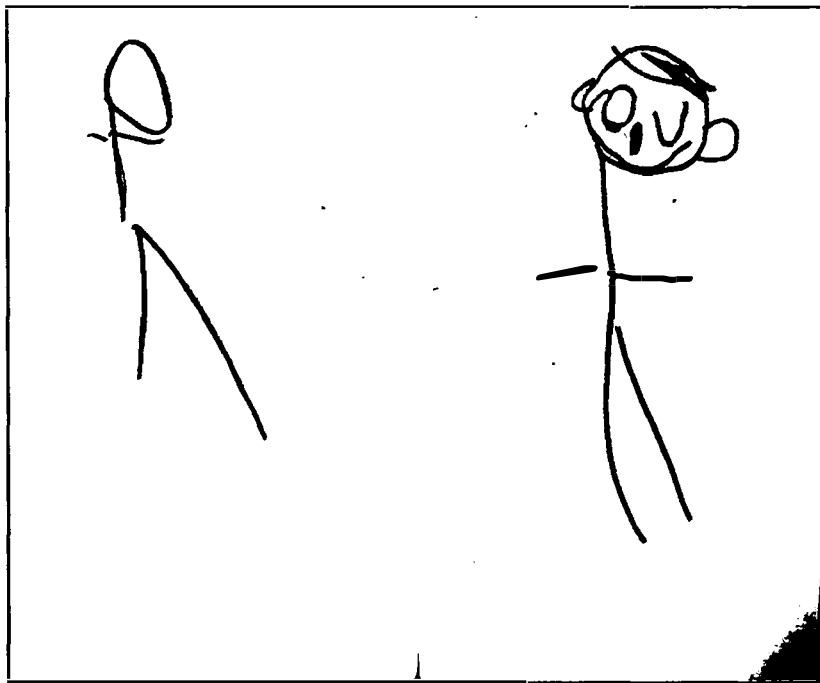
Figure 5-7. Alicia fireworks, page one.

"My dad was listening to the fireworks."

Figure 5-8. Alicia fireworks, page two.

"And me I was in the fireworks." Her mom helped her in drawing a car to show how they got to the fireworks.
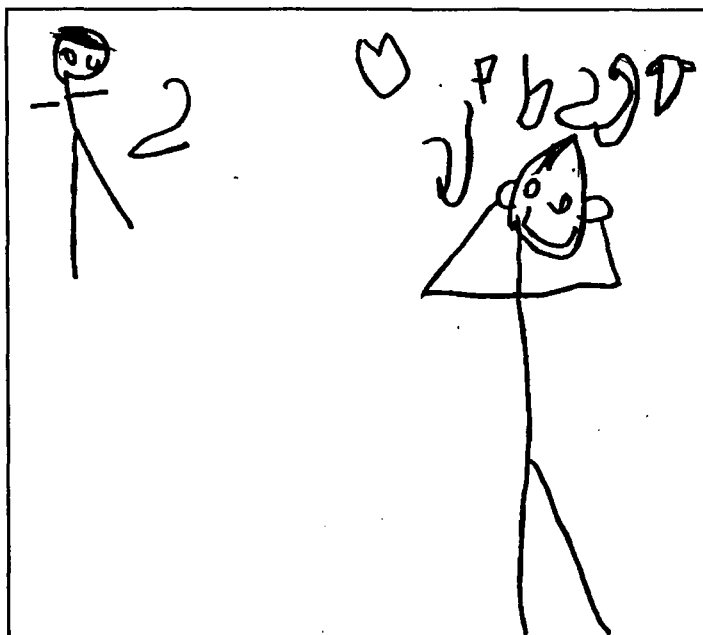
Figure 5-9. Alicia fireworks, page three.

"And Adalbert was at the fireworks." Her picture shows Adalbert covering his ears from the loud fireworks.
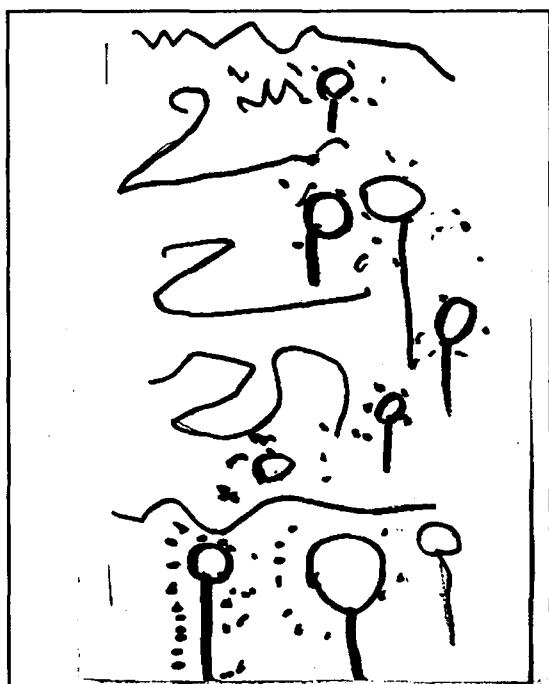
Figure 5-10. Alicia fireworks, back cover.

"The end."

       Alicia took her fireworks idea and developed it into a written story. Her story line remained consistent throughout each part of the evening's workshop. With the exception of the swimming detail, all other elements of her original story are present. Perhaps since her brother reminded her of the swimming part, she never internalized it, or the swimming detail did not fit withing her fireworks idea. Her published story is particuarly significant for a child of her age (three years old) because when she shared, each page represented one thought.

       For Korlu, this common experience allowed her story to be more focused and follow a single story line. As demonstrated in her dragon story from Chapter 4, she had a tendency to go in multiple directions.
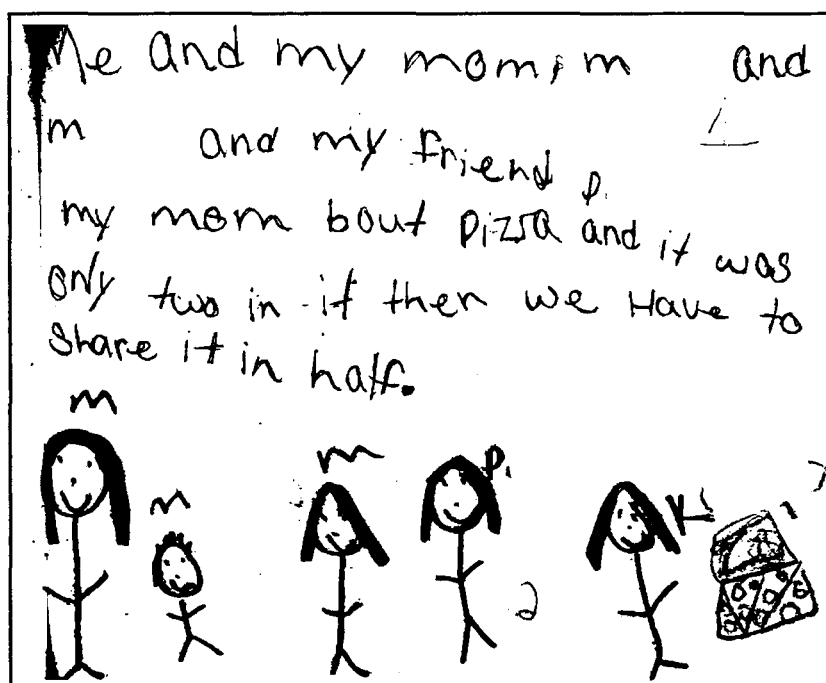
Figure 5-11. Korlu, Fourth of July, page one.

Me and my mom, Miatta, and Momo, and my friend Pam. My mom bought pizza and it was only two in it then we have to share it in half.
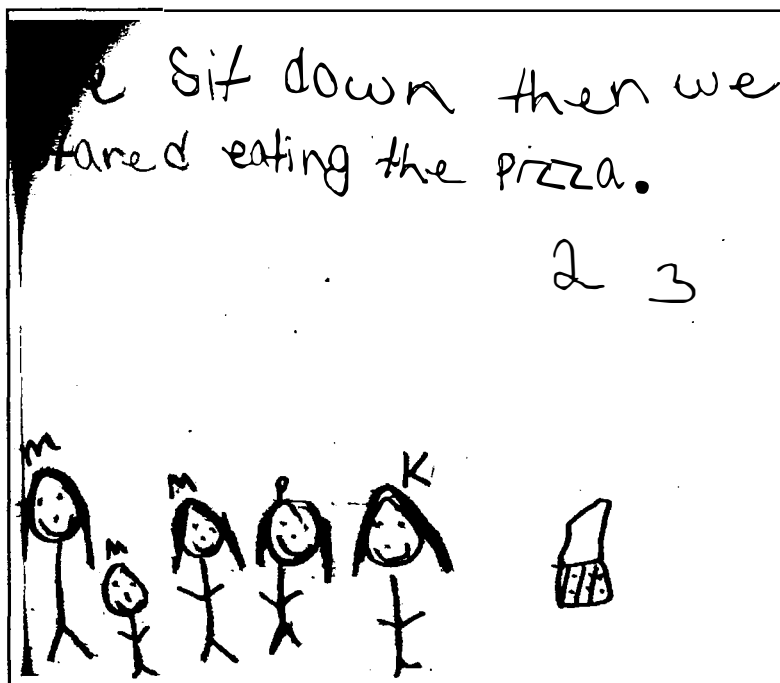
Figure 5-12. Korlu, Fourth of July, page two.

We sit down then we started eating the pizza.
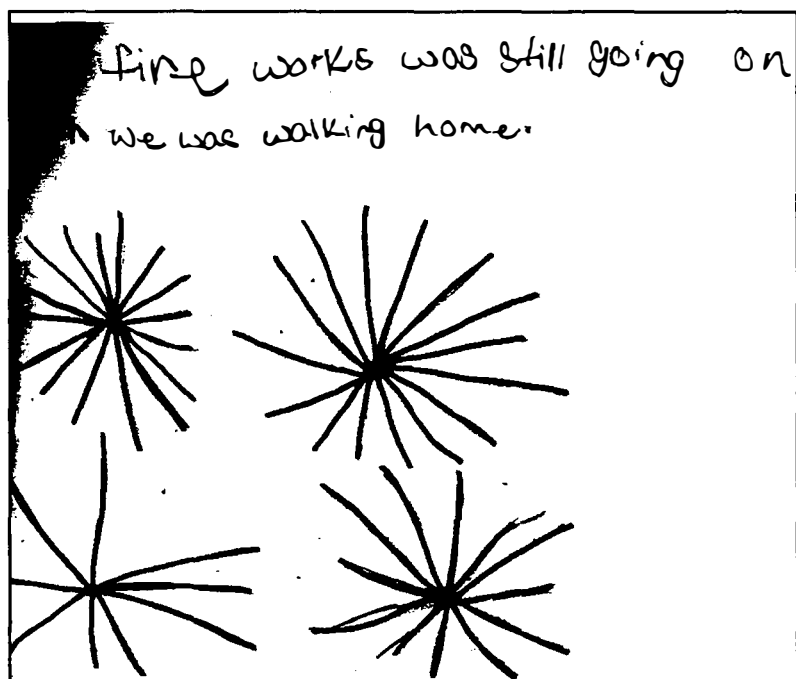
Figure 5-13. Korlu, Fourth of July, page three.

The fireworks was still going on when we was walking home.
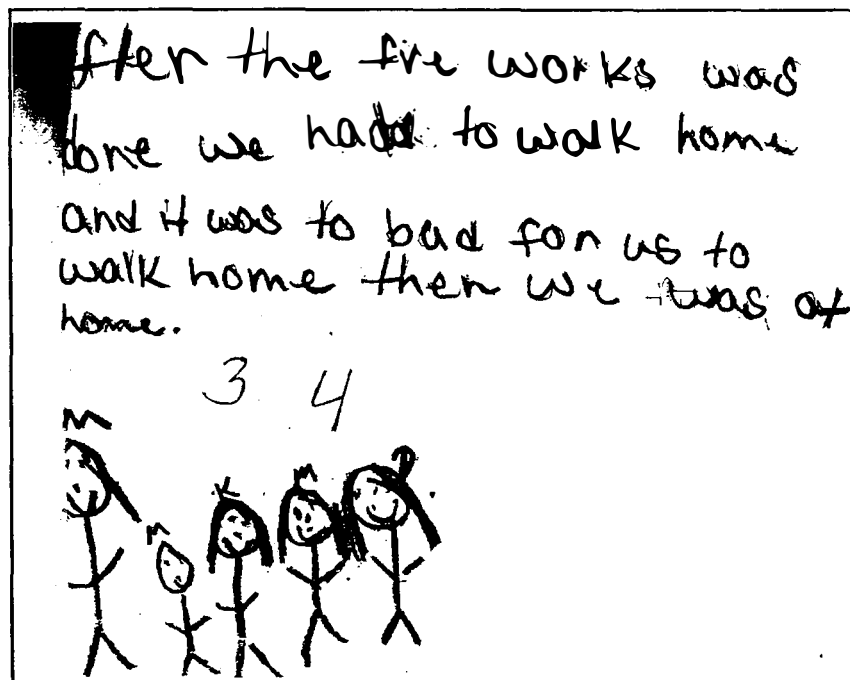
Figure 5-14. Korlu Fourth of July, page four.

After the fireworks was done we had to walk home and it was too bad for us to walk home then we was at home.

Glover (2009) describes what I did for the young writers with these words, "Teachers should search for entry points into the writing process in order to capitalize and maximize on each student's energy for writing" (p.24). Alicia and Korlu's books demonstrate how discovering a common experience, or an "entry point," amongst all group members is essential, particularly for young ELL writers because it provides an oral story model. I knew from past work young children often mirror the adult's stories. By using the Fourth of July as an entry point, and because I knew *each* child had done something to celebrate, they could make an individual connection to my story.

My story started a chain of stories, giving each child an opportunity to create an independent story. For example, while Alicia and Korlu's stories contrast, each writer

expanded on one event and went into great detail about this common experience. The Fourth of July was exciting and it was something everyone had experienced separately, thus motivating everyone at the workshop to share about it.

I Valued the Children's Voices

Valuing writers' communication attempts is crucial (Avery 2002; Calkins, Hartman, & Whit, 2005; Shagoury, 2008), especially for non-native English speakers. In the writing workshop I developed, tremendous value was placed on the possibility for writing or sharing in languages other than English.

Setting the stage for diverse voices. Participants' language choices were valued beginning on the first day of the workshop. This set the tone for the remaining days of the workshop. Aside from English, workshop participants spoke, or were familiar with, three other languages. The awareness of using languages other than English began on the workshop's first day when we established what a story was. After we "Said Hello" for the first time, I asked the children if they knew why they were at this workshop. After hearing "to write," "to read books," and "to play games," I told the children we were going to tell and write stories. "But before we do that, what is a story?" I asked the group. Korlu said it is "just like a book". Michelle called out, "pictures". Richard continued, "You can write to your dad and mom or your friends or sister." The children then expanded that "words, letters, and numbers" can be used in a story.

As I recorded their responses onto a poster, I brought out finger puppets and said today we would use these to tell stories. Since this was the first day, family members were assigned as partners. Aside from describing that puppets are one way to tell stories and quickly modeling, participants were given no other instructions. Pairs were scattered

throughout the room and for the next five minutes, stories were told. Michelle and Mrs. Torres were the only ones using a language other than English, Spanish in this case.

When we came back together, I asked them what they did with their puppets. "We told a story," Korlu says. I confirmed this and addressed Michelle. "Michelle," I asked, "What language did you tell your puppet story in?" "Spanish," she replied. "Oh, you mean other languages," Richard continued. "That's exactly right," I replied.

I was hoping the use of other languages would happen during the writing workshop, but I did not know how to elicit this. Directions were minimal on the workshop's first day because my goal was to allow the story telling to just happen in as natural of a way as possible. After hearing Spanish emerge from conversations, I realized this open-ended structure was essential to start the workshop off with in order to encourage participants to use languages they felt comfortable speaking. Had I been more specific with directions, the use of other languages might not have naturally emerged, thus decreasing the language's value because its use was scripted. The first day set the course for the workshop and from that point, stories were told, written, and shared in both English and Spanish, based on individual children's decisions.

Bringing out new writers' voices. Read-alouds are frequently used during writer's workshops to expose writers to other authors' craft or serve as entry points (Glover, 2009) for writing ideas. On the first day of the workshop's last week, I read *Fiesta!* by Ginger Foglesong Guy to the rising preschool and kindergarten participants (Andrea, Alicia, and Justin) and their parents. *Fiesta!* is a predictable counting book, written in both English and Spanish. As I sat in a circle with Alicia, Justin, Andrea, and their mothers, I asked for help reading the Spanish page. This invitation prompted the

mothers and children to read with me. On each page, we counted the objects in the picture to make sure it matched the number being written about. The book's predictable structure, picture clues, and bilingual text made it an easy, yet engaging, book for everyone to read together. When we finished, I asked the writers if they wanted to write their own counting books. Everyone thought this was a great idea and in pairs, family members began working on their counting books. These books became what both Alicia and Justin decided to publish. Below are excerpts from each of their published books.
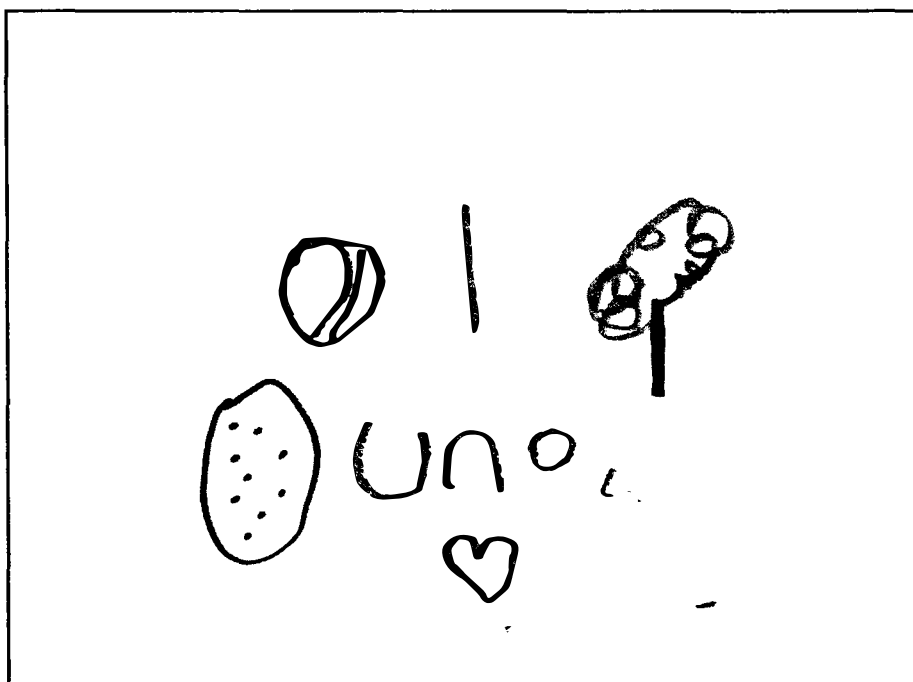
Figure 5-15. Alicia, page one, "Uno".
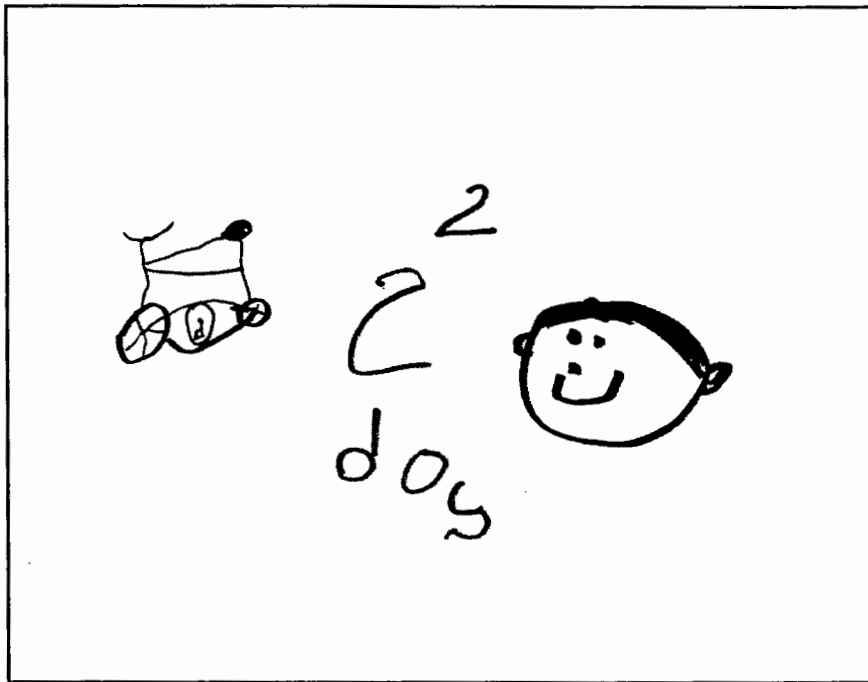
Figure 5-16. Alicia, page two, "Dos".
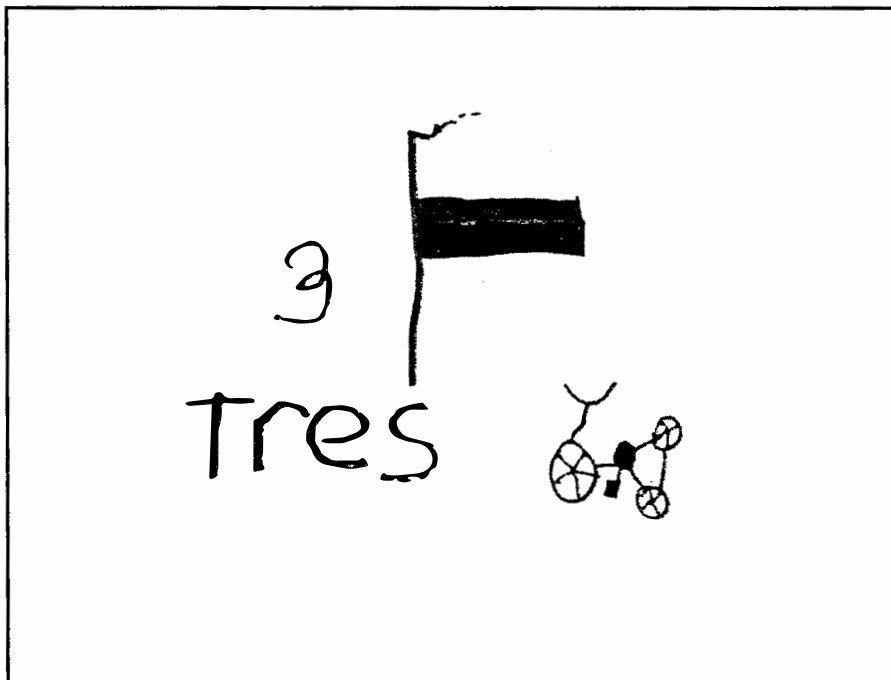
Figure 5-17. Alicia, page three, "Tres".

In Alicia's counting book, her pictures match the number being written about, such as the bicycle and tricycle. Most notably was her flag. The flag parallels Colombia's flag, connecting her ethnicity with the concept of a counting book. Each page is her handwriting, with her mother assisting her in various ways throughout. For example, to make the letters in "uno" her mother held her hand and wrote with her. Yet, for the word 'tres,' Alicia traced over the dotted lines her mother provided. She helped Alicia physically make the letters.

In Justin's counting book, he put multiple numbers on one page. In addition, his pictures representing the number are the same, whereas Alicia had different objects in each of her picture, such as a tricycle—representing three wheels—instead of drawing three bicycles. Most interestingly is Justin's first page, as previously shown in Figure 4-41. He incorporated his personal interests into his counting book. The first three objects he drew—panda, pirates, and jaguars—are things he spoke and wrote about frequently. His mother also helped him with writing the words, but her efforts were focused on spelling the words, writing each word on a scrap piece of paper so Justin could copy them.

When starting the counting books, aside from reading *Fiesta!* together and asking if they wanted to write a counting book, no other directions were given. *Fiesta!* was an appropriate read-aloud because it was useful for both the children and mothers. First, even though only two other read-aloud were used during the workshop, *Fiesta!* was in Spanish, thus showing these young writers books are, indeed, written in Spanish. Second, the read-aloud provided the mothers with structure on how to support their children in

making a counting book. For example, the pictures corresponded to the number being written about, just like in *Fiesta!*.

Importantly, as part of providing support for their children, the mothers' determined ways to scaffold the counting book genre to their child's level. Alicia's words were just the number written out, whereas Justin wrote out the object name. *Fiesta!* served as a common ground for families to begin writing together, yet each family produced very different counting books.

Glover (2009) discusses how read-alouds can be used as entry points into writing for young children. This idea transfers to ELL writers, and, as shown through Alicia and Justin's counting books, the selected read-alouds must invite writers in their native language. As the facilitator, it was important for me to choose an appropriate read-aloud in both language and feasibility, because in doing so, it invited young, new writers to write with their mothers.

Closing

In this workshop, facilitating meant beginning with the writers and valuing their voices. Just as a teacher should, as a facilitator I was purposeful and intentional in my decisions. These children received authentic instruction and, as young ELL writers, were successful.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion of Findings

My findings pertain to ELL family involvement within the context of family literacy. From my findings (involvement varies; investment is essential; and parents are teachers) one overall finding emerges to move the idea of ELL family literacy in a forward direction: the writing workshop is a context that invites involvement from ELL families.

Discussion of Findings Pertaining to Chapter 4

A writing workshop engages ELL families. There are three main reasons why the writing workshop in my study engaged the families. First, a writing workshop is a setting in which writers write frequently, and this level of engagement is necessary for changes in the literacy growth of ELL families. Whereas programs such as Write Night (Albee & Drew, 2000) provide collaboration between parents and children to create a meaningful product, they are infrequent in occurrence—just three times a year. If families cannot attend one evening, then the opportunity is missed. Frequent gatherings are necessary in order to build a community and establish a continuum for learning and progress.

Second, the family writing workshop provides a rich, in-depth system for engaging families. Parents learn specific suggestions, such as those provided in our mini-lessons, to provide family members with ways to support their children. In addition,

Family literacy programs such as family message journals (Wollman-Bonilla, 2000/2001) value family members' literacy contributions, but the families do not learn about school practices.

Another approach, in the form of parent education programs (Chavkin, Gonzalez, & Radar, 2000; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Clair & Jackson, 2006; Delgado-Gaitán, 1990) can be valuable because they increase parents' awareness of schools' expectations and ways to support their child's learning, but the schools do not learn about the families. Importantly, the family writing workshop structure creates a meaningful, two-way path for both learning and conversation.

Third, the family writing workshop is authentic (Lindfors, 2008) in its product and process. In a family writing workshop, children create books, something they can read at home. For school members, writing with families is a way to learn about the families' lives (Hurtig, 2004). As the teacher begins to understand the families, she creates lessons designed specifically to accommodate their interests, which is analogous to designing writing instruction—it must be individual and flexible in nature (Ray, 1999). When writing programs dictate what is taught, writers' authenticity (Lindfors, 2008) and individuality are lost; the same applies to family engagement. Arthur Kelly's Family Writing Project suggests scripted lessons and activities for launching a family writing workshop. Ultimately, while family involvement programs can learn from other programs, no two programs should mirror each other because the participants are not the same. I had five distinctly different families and, thus, my interactions with each of them varied. Families cannot be scripted.

Finally, a writing workshop has the potential to be empowering for participants. Delgado-Gaitán (1990) defines empowerment as the change participants experience that facilitates their full participation in their environment (p. 42). As writers, the opportunity to write books from their own ideas gave the participants' oral language status (Lindfors, 2008; Meier, 2000) and, thus, they attained a feeling of ownership. For ELL children and families, the opportunity to participate in their language gave them opportunities to fully participate.

Discussion of Findings Pertaining to Chapter 5

My decisions in how to implement the workshop came from relevant field research. Therefore, my findings about facilitating with authenticity are not "new" per se, but my study showed their application is crucial for this particular group of writers.

Related to my findings is the concept of entry points (Glover, 2009). From my study, entry points, as they pertain to English language learners are essential in relation to beginning with the writers and valuing their voices.

Entry points for English language learners. Matt Glover's 2009 book, *Engaging Young Writers: Preschool-Grade 1*, defines entry points as "invitations and motivations for young writers" (p. xi). This concept of "entry points" relates to my sub-findings, within the importance of authenticity, of beginning with the writer and valuing voices. My entry points evoked genuine enthusiasm in writing by valuing what each writer did and where each writer was. My study shows using entry points with ELL writers is a version of culturally responsive teaching; their diverse languages are seen as strengths and gateways into writing and exploring literature, rather than as problems.

Glover (2009) elaborates on the various entry points to use with young writers: dramatic play, books, interests, meaning, purpose, conversations, curriculum, and choice. Thus, in my study, we found a common experience in the Fourth of July, which allowed all of the children to share excitement when they talked and wrote about it.

From teaching ELL students and my research with ELL writers, I realize ELL writers are sometimes apprehensive about writing because of language mismatch. Or, the writing and reading they are surrounded with does not reflect their language, thus devaluing their language. Thus, finding entry points for ELL children, whether it is experiences or literature; it empowers. It enables them to write without hesitation. To validate ELL children's languages is a point particularly relevant for today's classroom teachers. While I used some of Glover's entry points (choice, books, writing about something you have done or know a lot about) in the summer writing workshop, one entry point I realized I used through my data analysis, which he could discuss, given the population of his school, was how language is an entry point for ELL writers. From the workshop's first day, the participants in my workshop, and myself encouraged story-telling, writing, and sharing in other languages.

This is an important contribution to the early childhood writing field because just as children write about something they know (Graves, 2003), they should write in the language they know. Writers are given choice with topic, paper, and materials; why not language? Other classrooms in which ELL writers were encouraged to write in whatever language they felt most comfortable found this to be beneficial; students intentionally chose their language and used it in a way that was beneficial to them (Hubbard & Shorey, 2003; Laman & Van Sluys, 2008).

Glover (2009) describes entry points as "capitalizing and maximizing each student's energy for writing" (p.24) and as Michelle showed us when she wrote in Spanish but shared in English, language can be used to harness motivation for writing. Michelle chose which language to write and share in, often changing her preference as the workshop progressed and her self-assurance increased. As Michelle demonstrated, when children use their native language, it can be an entry point into writing, build English language skills, increase confidence with another language, and ultimately lead to young ELL writers' growth.

Limitations

My findings may be restricted in their transferability to other school settings by the following limitations. The first limitation was language and culture. While I attempted to address language difference by providing a translator, it may be difficult for other educators to secure such services. Also, without a cultural translator for the two families from Africa, I may have misread some of the means by which they participated.

Additionally, I approached this study with a different cultural lens than each of my families, which potentially impacted how I gained meaning from their actions. This limitation, though, parallels limitations in the larger school structure when creating family engagement programs: teachers and administrators often view parents' actions through a different cultural lens. Family engagement programs that present the opportunity for dialogue between families and schools would be one way to increase awareness of each group's cultural influences and understandings.

A second limitation was the high involvement of the participating families. One challenge parents and administrators often face with family involvement is reaching *all*

families, but three of my families were identified by their schools as "very involved," one family learned about the workshop through family members, and the remaining family's personal friend was a university professor who told them about the workshop. Essentially, these families already valued learning and involvement, or had someone closely connected to them that did. A potential direction would be to create a writing workshop for families who seemingly are not involved in their children's education.

Implications for Educators

This workshop's process and outcomes provide several implications for educators when developing and implementing future engagement programs for ELL families. First, relationships are required for participant recruitment. Recruiting participants was a significant challenge to the workshop's implementation. Despite my focused efforts to address barriers identified by the research, barriers were still present and difficult to overcome. With the exception of one family, I relied on individuals with pre-established relationships with the families to attract their interest. Therefore, for classrooms and schools, establishing relationships with families is the most important factor for launching engagement programs.

Second, engagement programs must be social in nature. Numerous children in the post-workshop interviews described the fun, social aspect as why they liked coming to the workshop. As Richard stated: "I like coming because there are lots of different people that I never met that I make friends with." Isolated parent nights do not provide family members with the opportunity to get to know each other and build these relationships. Rather, engagement programs should provide families with opportunities to be interconnected, in order to give them this sense of belonging and community.

Third, family members should be included the planning for a program intended to engage them. In her book, *Literacy for Empowerment,* Delgado-Gaitán (1990) describes the importance of including parents in family engagement planning:

"…we are often led to believe that providing parents with training helps to integrate them into the mainstream of the school system. Part of the process of integrating minority families into the school system involves a cultural change on the part of families. Therefore, if the families do NOT [no] participate in their own process of change, they do not internalize the change nor are they actually participants in the system" (p.168).

At the workshop's publishing party, Mrs. Dominguez (via Jane the translator) told me she wished the workshop would continue: "I want to learn more to write in English. I go to class during the year, but I want to get better." In addition to the workshop helping her to teach her daughters, Mrs. Torres had her own learning goals. Family members, such Mrs. Torres, can be incorporated into family engagement planning as a way to power share, thus addressing families' needs and concerns.

Finally, this workshop showed for some families, logistical barriers could impact a family's ability to be involved in their child's learning. Also, with research showing the benefits of parental involvement on children's education (Fan & Chen, 2001; Sheldon, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Stevenson & Baker, 1987), participation in schools should not be limited by financial constraints. Whereas students' participation in reading intervention programs, for example, would never be determined by a family's financial means, this does not hold true for family engagement, despite both positively impacting children's academic gains. Family involvement needs to be a priority in schools' improvement plans, and it needs to be in ways that do not require parents to make financial sacrifices in order to be partners in their children's education.

Suggestions for Future Research

My suggestions for future research are based off my own thoughts, as well as participants' comments during the workshop. First, my former New York City first graders' parents inspired my idea for this workshop, so, naturally, I contemplated how this workshop would have played out had I done it with my former students' parents. One factor immediately stood out: all parents at the summer workshop were able to write and read in at least one language, whereas not all of my NYC students' parents could. With this in mind, future research should include family literacy engagement for all parents, including those who apparently cannot read and/or write. Schools' engagement programs should invite and value all families.

My second suggestion stems from my reflections in my methodological journal. I was intertwined with the participants and data since I was both the researcher and facilitator. Although this dual role is accurate of how a similar workshop would be implemented in school settings, it often left me wondering how the findings would be different if I assumed solely the researcher's role, or if I was just the facilitator and someone else was the researcher. For me, my dual role was incredibly fulfilling because I took an idea and made it a reality. At the same time, I was very invested in the workshop. This was certainly beneficial in the implementation, yet it certainly biased my analysis and it was time consuming balancing both roles. A suggestion for future research would be to have one person assume each role, therefore allowing each person to fully focus his or her efforts on the particular responsibility, and thus allowing the data to be analyzed via two lenses.

Finally, during the workshop's conclusion, Mrs. Torres commented how she wished the workshop continued into the school year. With this thought in mind, future research could examine a family writing workshop throughout the entire school year. While I was able to see the children's growth as writers in three weeks, there is potential for much more growth for the children, as well as in the amount parents could learn to support their children.

Further, alignment of the school curriculum with the family workshop would provide an on-going cohesive structure for families, the school, and the students.

Final Thought

The African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" speaks measures to the potential of effective school and family partnerships. Gordon (2009) echoes this in his statement about parental engagement as the next step in closing the achievement gap: there must be an equal push in improving our schools and parental engagement. Yet, so much of "the push" from schools to engage parents is uniform and unvarying, as if all families are alike. Thus parents' impact as teachers is never fully realized.

Genishi and Dyson (2009) contend the norm is diversity when thinking about today's students, classrooms, and curricula: Why standardize approaches and practices when classroom make-ups are not standard? This point also resonates with family engagement programs. As this workshop demonstrated, despite various ways of showing their involvement, parents are teachers. If more schools adopt a collaborative, diversified approach to family involvement, a more equitable education for all students can be achieved.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

UNIVERSITY *of* VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

In reply, please refer to: Project # 2009-0204-00

May 18, 2009

Elizabeth Korab
Stephen Plaskon
CISE (Curriculum, Instruction & Special Ed)
702 Gillespie Ave., Apt. B
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Dear Elizabeth Korab and Stephen Plaskon:

The Institutional Review Board for the Behavioral Sciences has approved your research project entitled "Families Writing Together: Young English Language Learners and their Parents." You may proceed with this study. Please use the enclosed Consent Form as the master for copying forms for participants.

This project # 2009-0204-00 has been approved for the period May 18, 2009 to May 17, 2010. If the study continues beyond the approval period, you will need to submit a continuation request to the Review Board. If you make changes in the study, you will need to notify the Board of the changes.

Sincerely,

Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences

Appendix B

Family Questionnaire

Tell Me More About Your Family!

Please bring these back to Elizabeth tomorrow! Thank you! ☺

How old is _____? _____

How old is _____? _____

Where is your family originally from?

How long have you been in the United States?

What languages are spoken at home?

What language(s) does your child(ren) read and write in?

As their parent, what would you like to learn how to do in this workshop to help your child as a writer?

What questions do you have for me?

Appendix C

Workshop Plan

Tuesday, June 30th
- Main Point: What is a story?
- Mini-Lesson: Telling a story: In partners, tell a story with puppets. Perform to the whole group.
- Independent write time
- Share

Wednesday, July 1st
- Main Point: We can tell stories. Toys can bring us story ideas…bring in a toy from home.
- Read-Aloud: *Knuffle Bunny*
- Telling a story: Whole group—tell a story about your toy.
- Independent Write Time
- Share

Thursday, July 2nd
- Main Point: We can tell stories. Pictures can bring us ideas—bring in a picture from home.
- Read-Aloud: *When I was Little*
- Telling a story: Whole group—tell a story about your picture.
- Mini-Lesson: Tricky Words: 1) look at the chart; 2) count the sounds 3) your own tricky word chart
- Independent Write Time
- Share

Tuesday, July 7, 2009
- Main Point: Tell me more!
- Telling a story: What is something you did with your family over the weekend? Tell in partners.
- Share to the whole group.
- Mini-Lesson: Compare my two books. How to "tell me more"—the pictures show more, I used more words, etc.
- Review Tricky words.
- Independent Write Time
- Share

Wednesday, July 8, 2009
- Main Point: Tell a story on your hands
- Show books—these books can tell stories about our families
- Tricky words: Develop "Story Word List"
- Model: Use Story words to tell a story on my hands

- Tell stories in partners
- Independent Write
  - o Small Group with me: Focus—Designing the lay out of your own book...planning across pages.
- Share

Thursday, July 9, 2009
- Main Point: Just tell about one thing
- Telling Stories: With your family
- Mini-Lessons Tricky Words: (with parents and Jane)
  - o Group 1: word wall folder
  - o Group 2: picture dictionary
- Independent Write Time
  - o Beginning, middle, and end. (DID NOT DO)
- Home Journals—interactive parent writing. Parent write a note—you write back. MODEL.

Tuesday, July 14, 2009
- Arrival: Read me what you wrote over the weekend
- Main Point: Publishing a Story—picking and making your best one!
- Picking and Choosing a story to publish:
  - o choose a post-it...pick one you want to publish...or write a new one to publish.
  - o What does publish mean?
- Group 1: Counting books—with the whole group
  - o mentor texts
- Group 2 (one-on-one conferences)
- Independent Write Time
- Share: What story did you pick to publish?

Wednesday, July 15, 2009
- Arrival: work time on your chosen "To Publish" story
- Mini-Lesson: using various art materials to publish your story (special scissors, oil pastels, and watercolors)
- Independent Write Time

Thursday, July 16, 2009
- Publishing Party

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Revised Consent and Materials Release Form

Project Title: Families Writing Together: Young English Language Learners and Their Parents

I agree for my child and myself to participate in the following ways in the study described in the previous letter. Remember all names will be in changed in any presentations or publications to respect your privacy.

Yes or no?

_____ The workshop leader, Elizabeth, may use samples of my child's work and my child's explanations of it when they teach, give presentations, and write for publication.

_____ The workshop leader, Elizabeth, may photograph me and/or my child during the workshop. These photos

_____ The workshop leader, Elizabeth, may interview me before, during, or after the workshop.

Name of child: _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

Date: _____

IRB Project # 2009-0204
Approved from 5/18/09 5/17/10

Revised Consent and Materials Release Form

Project Title: Families Writing Together: Young English Language Learners and Their Parents

Material Release Statement: Tape-Recorded Interviews

(This script will be read orally at the beginning of our interview.)

During our interviews, I will be recording what you say so I can type up notes afterwards. Some of the things you said in the interview might be shared with others. Your real name will not be given, but a pseudonym will be used so no one knows who you are, except for me and I promise not to share this with others.

After the interview has been typed up, the recording will them be erased.

Can I record your interview and share it with others?

If you agree, you can change your mind anytime...and that is just fine. Just let me know.
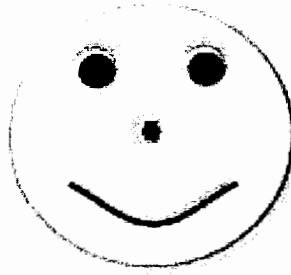
IRB Project # 2009-0204

Approved from 5/18/09 to 5/17/10

Appendix E

Children Interview Protocol

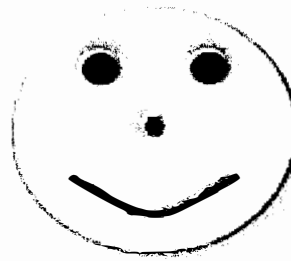## Tell Elizabeth about writing

Did you like coming to the writing workshop?

Do you like writing by yourself?

Do you like writing with your family?

Are you a better writer now? Why?

Appendix F

Parent Interview Protocol

Family Writing Workshop Interview Questions: Family Members

Family Involvement
- Have you been involved with parent programs at your child's school before? If so, can you tell me about them? Why or why not do you choose to be involved in those programs?
- Does your child bring home homework? If so—does anybody help them? What does that look like?
- Do you do any other kinds of at-home learning with your child(ren)? (Reading books, counting, etc.)
- Do you talk with your child about the school day?

Writing
- Did you learn anything about helping your child as a writer in this workshop? If so, what?
- What are your thoughts on the workshop?
  - What was helpful?
  - What should have been changed?
  - What would you have liked more of?
- Have you seen your child's attitude and willingness to write change?
- What about your attitude and willingness to write? Did this make you think of anything about your own self as a writer?

In the future...
- Have you done any writing since our workshop ended? (This might be too soon to ask that...but this WILL be followed up on...)
- Have you read your book together since the workshop ended?
- What kind of writing do you intend to continue to do at home?