

Practicing Equity and Excellence through Flexible Adaptation for Grant Activities in a Pandemic: Case Study of Virtual and Hybrid Family Engagement for Leadership and Biliteracy Development

Kim Song, Lisa Dorner, Greg Child, Nicole King, & Sophia Piral Lee, *Strengthening Equity & Effectiveness for Teachers of English Learners* (SEE-TEL, 2017-2022, www.see-tel.org)

This qualitative case study presents the recent journey of the SEE-TEL project: the Multilingual Family Storybook Project. As with other educational endeavors, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our plans to support teachers of emerging bilingual learners; we had to figure out how to continue meeting our main objectives to enhance teachers' racially-, culturally- and linguistically-sustaining pedagogies. Under an overarching question on how the SEE-TEL team flexibly designed a multilingual family storybook project in a translanguaging space, we asked three research questions: (1) How did multilingual family members demonstrate their leadership in creating their own stories and illustrations? (2) How did families develop their relationships with their children and teachers/school? (3) How did families use their full linguistic repertoires during the story making process?

Theories on community translanguaging (Kim et al., 2021) and critical approaches to family engagement shaped this project (Dorner et al., 2019; Song & Child, 2021). Participants in this multilingual family storybook project came from four districts: 15 mothers, 4 fathers, 23 children, 24 cohort teachers and 4 SEE-TEL research team members. Data sources included: video recordings of planning meetings, audio recordings of family dialogues and stories, family interviews, family storybooks and illustrations, researcher field notes, teacher reflections, and a family survey from 3 to 5 workshops per district from February to April 2022. We used open and axial coding in our qualitative data analysis process.

Our preliminary findings include:

1. Multilingual Family Leadership

- a. Children and parents took ownership of their storybooks by choosing: (1) which language(s) to use during the workshops and for the books (English, home language, translanguaging); (2) which story to create, when and how to create it; (3) how to illustrate the story (using computer drawings and images or drawing by hand); (4) how long the story would be; (5) roles and responsibilities within the family; and (6) when and how to ask for support from teachers.
- b. Children had the power to make decisions and be language brokers for teachers and parents.

2. Multilingual Family Relationship Building

- a. *Parent-Child Relationship Building*
 - i. The creative process allowed parents to share stories about their childhood, ancestors, religion, culture, country, morals, and food with all of their children.
 - ii. Families shared their love, care, pride, appreciation, and support to children through physical and visual contact, and verbal and non-verbal affirmations.
- b. *Family-School Relationship Building*
 - i. Parents had the opportunity to share with teachers and other parents about their culture, country, spiritual and education beliefs/practices, food, and unique family dynamics.
 - ii. Led by multilingual teachers and translators, the workshops centered families' language choices. English-only teachers collaborated by learning and using families' languages and other nonverbal semiotics to interact with parents and children.

3. Multilingual Family Translanguaging

- a. Families practiced English and their home languages in writing, reading, and pronunciation.
- b. Parents taught their home languages to children, and children taught English words to parents in a fun, harmonious, and creative process that included all immediate family members.

A story that talks about having a magical adventure ends with...
"Comprendí que la magia verdadera es el regalo de viajar con mi familia."
I understood that the real magic is the gift of traveling with my family.

Contact us any time! songk@umsl.edu or dornerl@missouri.edu

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