

Introduction to Workshops Addressing Dual-Language Communities

Tell Me A Story (TMAS) is a literacy-based emotional expressiveness program designed to help preschoolers, their parents, and teachers discuss difficult emotions associated with challenging situations. Tell Me A Story developed as part of Family Connections, an initiative based at Boston Children's Hospital to support early childhood programs in their mental health outreach to families facing adversities, particularly parental depression. Tell Me A Story was developed in concert with Family Connections' broader goals of promoting self-reflection in early childhood professionals and providing developmentally appropriate tools in support of social-emotional growth in children under 6 years old.

Helping families is both the motivation for and the goal of the Tell Me A Story (TMAS) program. TMAS addresses parent engagement through workshops targeted specifically for parents, and through workshops for staff to address how to effectively reach out to parents who may be facing difficulties. The *TMAS Workshops* were developed to encourage and support teachers and parents in their efforts to help children feel safe, able, and confident in talking about their feelings.

With support from the Tulsa Children’s Project funded by the George Kaiser Family Foundation, Family Connections joined members of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University to develop new trainings, book guides, and a short paper that integrate mental health issues with literacy needs of young children. Using *Voices PreK*¹, an early literacy curriculum published as part of the *Voices Reading* by Zaner-Bloser, this integrated team set out to support oral language comprehension and production skills in young children with attention to social, emotional, and cultural issues. Using the materials from *Voices Reading* as our guide, this team focused on creating resources for working with children and parents that may be used in preschool classrooms across the country.

In the following three trainings: *Engaging Families Across Language Backgrounds*, *Creating Programs to Partner With Immigrant Parents*, and *Engaging Dual-Language Learners in Head Start Preschool Classrooms*, you will find materials that help you address the rewards and challenges that may be present in communities where there are multiple languages spoken. Many early childhood professionals work with children and families with first languages that are different from their own. In these cases, early childhood professionals may find it difficult to create engaging learning environments for children who come to class without understanding English. These three trainings focus on creating a supportive, stimulating educational environment for dual-language learners.

¹Dr. Catherine Snow, Dr. Robert L. Selman, and Dr. Patrick C. Walker are the senior authors of the *Voices* curriculum

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Authors would like to recognize *Voices PreK*, an early literacy curriculum published as part of *Voices Reading* by Zaner-Bloser. The goal of *Voices PreK* is to develop oral language comprehension and production skills in children 3-5 years old. Senior authors of the *Voices* curriculum are Catherine Snow, Ph.D., Robert L. Selman, Ph.D., and Patrick C. Walker, Ph.D. The Tell Me A Story Book Guide 2011 series was developed to supplement guidance available in the Zaner-Bloser Teacher Guides about using trade books included in the PreK curriculum in preschool classrooms.

Authors of the *Engaging Families Across Language Backgrounds*, *Creating Programs to Partner With Immigrant Parents*, and *Engaging Dual-Language Learners in Head Start Preschool Classrooms* workshops are Russell H. Carlock, Jennifer DiBara Crandell, Monica Yudron, Catherine Snow, Emily Potts Callejas, Catherine Ayoub, and William R. Beardslee. The authors would like to acknowledge John Hornstein for his contributions to the editing of The Tell Me A Story Series. The authors would like to acknowledge Mary Watson Avery and Caroline Watts for their contributions to the conceptualization of the series Guide. © Children’s Hospital Boston 2011. All Rights Reserved.