

Parents Supporting Their Children in the Acquisition  
of Language and Number Sense

A Project Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Masters of Arts

by  
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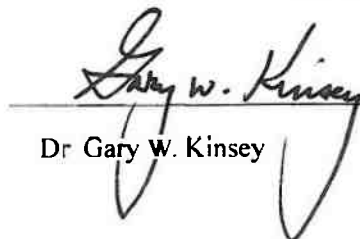
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Developing language and Number Sense  
Title of Item

Parent participation, language development, number sense  
3 to 5 keywords or phrases to describe the item

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## Table of Contents

Chapter 1:	
Purpose of Project .....	5
Definition of Terms .....	6
Significance .....	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	8
Chapter 3: Process/Product.....	15
Setting.....	15
Process.....	17
Development of Workshop.....	19
Chapter 4: Implementation.....	25
Chapter 5: Results.....	28
Chapter 6: Conclusions/Next Steps.....	33
References.....	37

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Purpose of Project

The purpose of my project is to increase parental involvement by providing information about the English Language Development (ELD) Program in the Santa Paula Elementary School District, discussing different techniques to help young children develop language, and demonstrating different techniques that parents can use at home to help young children develop number sense. I hope that my project will help parents gain an understanding of the ELD program and learn skills so they can provide a rich home environment where language development is facilitated by daily family interaction. In addition, I hope to guide parents on the acquisition of simple mathematical techniques which they can use to support their children's development of number sense.

The following questions will guide me in the development of two workshops for parents:

1. What is parental involvement, and what is its significance according to educational researchers?
2. What sections of the Intensive English ELD program can parents use at home to help their children develop language?
3. What are some techniques or exercises which parents can practice at home with their kindergarten or first grade children to develop number sense?

## Definitions of Terms

**Family:** Includes all those sharing responsibility for the care and raising of the child, within parameters of legal responsibilities and parental, custodian or guardian consent. (Robinson & Diaz, 2006).

**Parental Involvement:** (Statutory definition defined in No Child Left Behind Act)The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring that parents:

- a) play in integral role in assisting their child's learning
- b) are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school
- c) are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committee to assist in the education of their child.

([http://definitions.uslegal.com/p/parental\\_involvement/](http://definitions.uslegal.com/p/parental_involvement/))

**English Language Learner (ELL):** Any student whose initial Home Language Survey indicates that his/her first language is not English ([www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org)).

**Number Sense:** an intuitive understanding of numbers, their magnitude, relationships, and how they are affected by operations (<http://www.learnnc.org/reference/number+sense>).

## Significance

Parental involvement in their children's education is now widely accepted as significant in supporting student achievement in schools (Baker & Soden, 2005, p. 550). Due to its importance, parental involvement was made part of the Single Plan for Student Achievement at

Glen City Elementary School. The goal is to increase parental involvement by providing information on activities that parents can practice at home with their children. The school district will create opportunities where parents can learn how to become more supportive of their children's education and become more active in school activities. The project is designed to provide information and training on specific strategies parents can use at home to support their children in the areas of language development and number sense for kindergarten and first grade.

The Santa Paula English Language Development (ELD) Committee under the direction of Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Robin Freeman, decided to focus on providing workshops for parents of kindergarten and first grade students. The committee's discussions led to the conclusion that parents of kindergarten and first grade students need information about the ELD program and ways to support language development. Several ELD committee members reported that many kindergarten students are entering school with limited language. Kindergarten students are being referred for language/speech support and many of the referred students are qualifying for language/speech services. Therefore, providing information and training was determined to be necessary to help parents support their child's language development. As the ELD representative at Glen City Elementary, I was designated to provide the parent information workshop.

The acquisition and mastering of number sense takes time and lots of experience for children to develop. "It is sad to see the large number of students in grades 4, 5, and above who essentially know little more about number than how to count" (Van De Walle, 2004, p. 115). As a kindergartener teacher, I see the challenges that many young learners face when they attempt to make sense of numbers. Kindergarten students not only have to learn to count by rote, but they also have to order numbers, understand concepts of "more," "less," and "equal" as well as to



identify numbers 1-30 out of order. Parents are often unaware of the academic demands their young children face; therefore, it is necessary to provide parental guidance for effective home support of school pursuits (Panferov, 2010).

Finally, I would like to begin a school practice where school staff begins to provide support to parents who desire to gain tools which can help support their children's education. Joyce Epstein, of Johns Hopkins University, has developed a framework for defining six different types of parent involvement. One type of parent involvement is Learning at Home where the school staff provides information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning (Epstein & Associates, 2009). This practice would support learning at home.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Families play a crucial role in their children's education (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005). Research supports the importance of parental involvement for improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates regardless of socioeconomic background or ethnicity (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of this literature review is to examine the research on parental involvement. Specifically, this review will focus on the importance of improving parent involvement.

### **Review Procedure**

I did a preliminary literature search through Educational Resources information Center (ERIC) using the John Spoor Broome internet library connection for California State University, Channel Islands. I used the keywords, parental involvement and parental participation.

Unfortunately, many of the articles were unavailable through ERIC because access was disabled due to the discovery of personally identifiable information in the articles. Therefore, I conducted further research via Google Scholar. After carefully examining the articles covering my area of interest, I determined three areas of importance to write my literature review.

### Parent Involvement and Its Importance

Parent involvement can mean different things to different people; therefore, it is important to clearly define it. In simple terms, parent involvement can be defined as any action taken by parents/families that leads to their children's academic improvement. Nevertheless, researchers have defined parental involvement and broken it down into categories. Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at the Center on Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University, use six categories to define parent involvement. These are: Parenting, Communicating, Supporting school, Learning at home, Decision making, and Collaborating with community (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Furthermore, a statutory definition also exists. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act defines parental involvement as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication. It emphasizes that parents are integral in assisting children in their learning and that it is necessary for parents to become active members of the school environment. ([http://definitions.uslegal.com/p/parental\\_involvement/](http://definitions.uslegal.com/p/parental_involvement/)).

Title III of NCLB requires that State education agencies, school districts, and schools involve parents of English Language Learners in the decision-making process of Title III programs and activities at both the state and local levels. Title III provides funding to state and local education agencies who are obligated by NCLB to increase the English proficiency and

core academic content knowledge of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students (Public Education Network and National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education). Because of NCLB regulations, each school receiving Title III funding must include some form of parental involvement goals and actions leading to parental involvement in its Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA).

Epstein considers parents' communication with their children to be an important form of parent involvement (2002). Pelletier and Brent (2002) associate this communication with positive social and academic outcomes for children and with increased self-efficacy among parents. In addition, parental involvement can consist of traditional and nontraditional practices. Traditional practices include actions such as engaging parents in fundraising, attending teacher-parent conferences, and giving input on selective decisions when requested by school staff. A more engaging and empowering way of involving parents are nontraditional activities where parents and school staff create and execute ideas or activities which lead to the academic enrichment of students (Gaitan, 2004, p. 19).

For example, Gaitan points out that teachers and parents can plan activities where parents take the leadership role. Parents, for example, could lead a meeting or activity in their own language. Another example could be parents taking a specific role in school activities. Furthermore, school staff can communicate in the parents' primary language. Gaitan also points out that to increase Latino parental involvement, communication has to be ongoing. It can also be short-term or long-term and should be determined based on the need of the parent or teacher's need to communicate (p. 23). Regardless of how parental involvement is defined, many studies have demonstrated the positive effects of parent involvement on student achievement in many areas, including grade point average, standardized test scores, behavior, and graduation rates

(Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Barnard, 2004; Epstein, 1995; Walker, Shenker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). Due to the established importance of parental involvement, it is important that educators know and understand the parents' experiences and recollections of their own school years. Antikainen (1998) states that the meanings assigned to education contribute to educational life histories identities, even educational generations. A grandparent's poor or tragic educational experiences can influence the younger generation. Those recollections could become the younger generations' educational reality until new experiences are formed.

### Parents' School Experiences

Although parents of all socioeconomic status want their children to succeed academically, Gorman (1998) found that middle-class parents recalled their school experiences mainly in positive terms. However, Sennet and Cobb found in a much earlier study (1972) that working-class parents recalled their school years adversely. Komulainen (1999) also found that working-class parents recalled experiences of frustration and humiliation. In a Finnish study, Rätty (2003) found that highly educated parents remembered their primary school in more positive terms than did less educated parents. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, an individual is influenced by the environment in which he or she develops. Therefore, the parents' perceptions and recollections of their own school experiences may influence the child's own experience. Therefore, it behooves educators to learn about the attitudes parents hold regarding their own educational experiences and recollections as those may affect the child (Harper & Pelletier, 2010).

It is also important to point out that attitudes are not fixed and can be altered. The functional theory of attitudes as outlined by Smith et al. (1956) holds that people develop, retain and alter attitudes for value-expressive, ego-defensive, knowledge, and social adjustment

purposes. A negative perception or recollection can be positively changed when new positive experiences are created for both the student and the parent.

Parents' early school experiences and recollections are not the only factors that affect parental involvement. English Language Learner parents also face their own challenges. With few education experiences and skills, it is often difficult for them to become involved in the traditional ways of a school environment (Gaitan, 2004, p. 61). Due to their race, class, immigrant status, language proficiency and level of education, many ELL parents are described as marginalized groups (Hudak, 1993, pp. 172-187). "Marginalized" parents are those parents who are not involved in the same capacity or extent as White, middle class parents. These groups of parents experience school-based barriers, lack of English language proficiency, parental educational level, disjuncture between school culture and home culture, and logistical issues (Tinkler, 2002). English Language Learner parents have reported as being perceived as lacking resources and being criticized as lacking parental interest (Ascher, 1988). Despite the challenges that parents face, educators can take positive and meaningful action to involve parents with the intention of improving students' educational goals and performance.

### Promoting Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is not or should not be the responsibility of families alone. Instead, it is a partnership amongst families, schools, and community with the sole purpose of benefiting the child in his/her educational endeavors presently and later in life (Epstein, 2009, p. 9). Epstein developed a framework of six major types of involvement. The framework was developed based on the results of numerous studies and years of work by educators and families from elementary to high school levels. The following table names and provides a brief explanation of each of the six types of involvement.

## Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement

<b>Type 1</b>	<b>Type 2</b>	<b>Type 3</b>	<b>Type 4</b>	<b>Type 5</b>	<b>Type 6</b>
<b>Parenting</b>	<b>Communicating</b>	<b>Volunteering</b>	<b>Learning at Home</b>	<b>Decision Making</b>	<b>Collaborating With the Community</b>
Help all families establish home environments to support children as students	Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and their children's progress	Recruit and organize parent help and support	Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning	Include parents in school decisions developing parent leaders and representatives	Identify and integrate resources and services for the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development

(Epstein, 2009, p.16)

Researchers continue to investigate effective practices that lead to parental engagement and communication has been found to be instrumental. Teacher-initiated contact with parents was associated with greater parent-initiated contact with schools and better academic performance of students (Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill, 1991). School-home communication can be promoted through the use of a home-school coordinator, home visits by teachers, sending out newsletters or any written communication in the home language, providing a telephone homework line in the language that is understood by parents, or scheduling monthly meetings at a local community center (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001).

In school communities with English Language Learners, it is important to offer both traditional and nontraditional opportunities to encourage parental participation. Traditional practices include assisting families with parenting and childrearing skills, communicating with families about school programs and student progress, providing activities that involve families

with their children in learning activities at home, and promoting volunteerism. Schools can also promote nontraditional practices which include: providing parental education that includes family literacy and understanding school community, promoting parental advocacy, instilling parental empowerment through parent-initiated efforts at the school and community level, implementing culturally and linguistically appropriate practices in all aspects of communication (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

Research has also been conducted into the correlation of adult education participation and parent involvement. Epstein (1992) and Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) found that parents participating in adult education set and voice their educational expectations to their children, support a child's out-of-school learning, advocate on behalf of their children, communicate with school staff, and maintain a presence at school. Furthermore, participation in adult education provides parents access to resources, content knowledge, and other supports from the instructor and fellow students (Shiffman, 2011).

When considering parental involvement, educators should also consider the families' socio-cultural backgrounds. Regardless of the socio-cultural backgrounds, parents believe that school is important in their children's future (McConchie, 2004; Sanders & Epstein, 1998). However, existing family-school partnerships, frameworks, and policies reflect the dominance of Epstein's typology of parent involvement which is typical of families from more dominant socio-cultural, middle-class, and managerial backgrounds (Borg & Mayo, 2001; de Carvalho, 2001). Considering the socio-cultural families backgrounds is important because cultural educational values are transmitted from families to children. Graham and Hudley observe that immigrant parents communicated to their children their values of hard work and the importance of a good education (2005, p. 404).

Immigrant parents include their children in their daily activities and conversations. Hispanic children interact not only with their parents but also with their extended families. Additionally, families where verbal interaction was not common place, communication becomes important after they participate in parent education (Heller 1966). Families also contribute to their children's learning by believing in their children's competence, providing resources, promoting problem-solving and autonomy, exposing children to new experiences, and encouraging curiosity (Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 1994).

### Conclusion

A robust body of literature exists to establish the correlation of student achievement and parental participation. Parents of all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds want their children to be successful in school. Among the benefits of parental involvement are higher grades, better attendance, improved behavior, and lower levels of dropouts.

Also, research gives evidence of many practices that can successfully lead to a school-home partnership. Educational agencies should carefully consider the parents' needs and strengths when developing and encouraging parental participation. Careful planning and implementation of parental involvement practices can positively create an environment where the student's needs are considered and addressed with the purpose of supporting the child's educational needs and promoting educational success.

### Chapter 3: Process/Product

#### Setting:

Glen City School is located at 141 South Steckel Drive in Santa Paula. It is adjacent to the District Office building. There are 604 students enrolled in grades kindergarten to fifth. The



majority of students are English Language Learners and of Hispanic or Latino descent, 96.9 %, White 2.5%, and Pacific Islander .5%. There are 442 English Language Learners in grades Kindergarten through fifth. (<http://www.axioadvisors.net>).

There are 387 socioeconomically disadvantaged children. (<http://www.axiomadvisors.net>). Based on the 2011-2012 Accountability Progress Reporting (APR), 97% of the student population is Hispanic and 3% is White. Also, 85% of the student body is eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, and 16% of the student body participate in the Migrant Education Program. Sixty-four percent of the students' parents are not high school graduates vs. 21% of parents who are high school graduate (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/snapshot/>).

All of the Glen City Elementary teaching staff is credentialed. One of the two special education teachers is currently working on her special education credential but already has her multiple subject teaching credential. Thirteen members of the teaching and administrative staff have Master of Arts degrees. The average number of year service among the staff is 14.1. Four teachers have between 20-35 years of teaching experience (<http://www.axiomadvisors.net/livesarc>).

Glen City Elementary is in its second year of Program Improvement due to its failure of meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Academic Performance Index (API) targets for its significant subgroups, Hispanic or Latino, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, and English Language Learners. The school is also the recipient of a QEIA (Quality Education Investment Act) grant. This grant facilitates smaller classes at a 20:1 student-teacher ratio in grades K-3, and 26:1 student-teacher ratio in grades 4-5. However, for the past two years the Santa Paula Elementary School district has requested a waiver which allows the district to increase class size. In Kindergarten to third grade, classes should not exceed 22 students and fourth to fifth classes

should not exceed 29 students. The waiver was requested because the district does not have the funds needed to hire more teaching personnel; however, it wishes to maintain smaller class sizes to maximize the potential of student achievement. Without the waiver, the class size in kindergarten to third grade would be 26 students per class, and 33 students in fourth and fifth grades.

In 2008-2009 School Year, Glen City students performed well on the California State Test. Students showed a growth of 50 points as measured by the Academic Performance Index (API). However, during the past three years there has been a decline in the Academic Performance Index. In 2009-10 and 2010-11, Glen City scored 5 points fewer than the prior school year, dropping its score of 793 points to 778 points. In 2011-12, Glen City Elementary improved by five points; however this growth was not enough to meet its academic target (<http://www.cde.ca.gov>).

**Process:**

As a result of its Program Improvement (PI) status, Santa Paula Elementary reviewed its Master Plan for English Language Learners, English Language Arts, and Math. Last year, under the direction of Robin Freeman, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, several committees were formed to create and implement the new master plan.

The English Language Development (ELD) committee began its monthly meetings in October 2011 to review and rewrite the goals for the Title III Plan for Year 2 Districts. Title III is known as the English Language Acquisition Enhancement and Academic Achievement Act, and it provides funds to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to implement language instructional programs designed to help English Language Learners (ELLs) achieve academic standards.

(<http://www.cde.ca.gov>). Santa Paula Elementary School District is in its second year of Title III Program Improvement.

One of the goals of the Title III plan at Santa Paula Elementary School District was to increase parent participation by having parents attend two training sessions where they could learn how they can use daily conversation about common activities to enrich their children's language. An overview of language acquisition and ideas for language development were discussed during the English Language Development committee meetings and were included in the Master Plan for English Learners.

The committee decided to target parents of kindergarten and first grade students. Each school site ELD committee representative was responsible for planning and carrying out the parent workshop using the material chosen by the ELD committee. Santa Paula Elementary School District adopted a new English Language Development curriculum, Treasures; therefore, the ELD committee decided to use the materials from the Santillana Intensive English Language program, which was previously used by the teaching staff for English Language Development.

Also, the ELD committee wrote sentence frames both in Spanish and English for parents to use when promoting language development. It was decided that during the parent workshop, parents would be given a small presentation on the importance of language development and how they could promote language development in their children's daily lives. Also, parents would be instructed on how to properly use the Santillana Intensive English cards. These cards are examples of English lessons. They contain an illustration on one side of the card. The reverse side of the card has different sections which are used to teach lessons on vocabulary, grammar, reading, comprehension, and oral development. To ensure that parents understood the use of the Intensive English cards, parents would also be given time to practice following the presenter's

modeling. As the site ELD representative, I was given the responsibility to plan and conduct the parent workshop.

### **Development of Workshop: Language Development**

I first met with the school principal, Sheryl Misenhimer, to schedule the first parent workshop and discuss the workshop's objective and content. The workshop was scheduled for December 5, 2012, as it was my intent to provide material and the information to the parents so they could work with their children during the Winter Break. I also informed the principal that I sought the participation of two other teachers. My intention was to have teachers from both kindergarten and first grade participate in the workshop to help model the use of the cards and provide any additional support; however, the first grade teachers expressed that they did not have time. Luckily two kindergarten teachers agreed to participate, and the principal also expressed her desire to contribute as a facilitator.

The parent workshop was announced on the school calendar for the month of December. I also prepared and hung two banners promoting the parent workshop two weeks prior to December 5, 2012. Bilingual, English and Spanish, flyers were sent to all parents of kindergarten and first grade English Language Learners on November 26 and again on December 3, 2012. Also, the workshop was announced to parents of English Language Learners attending Student Study Team (SST) meetings during the month of November. To prepare for the parent workshop, I requested the Santillana Intensive English cards from the District Office. A set of 10 cards was inserted in a large manila envelope along with a list of sentence frames. In addition, a PowerPoint presentation in Spanish was prepared to present to the parents on the night of the parent workshop. Mabel Esquivel, a kindergarten teacher, and I, collaboratively prepared the power point presentation which included suggestions on how to develop language.

Before creating the power point presentation, I researched the process of language acquisition and decided to focus on Jerome Bruner's theory of language acquisition which centers on formats. Formats are recurrent socially patterned activities in which adult and child do things together (Cole, 2001, p. 317). The following list of ideas was included in the presentation:

- Oral stories: develop vocabulary and oral expression, encourage children to create their own stories.
- Wordless books: elicit conversation about the illustrations, help to develop a sense of how stories are developed, and encourage children to make predictions.
- Rhymes and songs: develop oral expression and intonation.
- Visiting the public library: provides free reading material, music, videos, and other library services.
- Conversations: "Crucial vehicles in the passage from communication to language" (Bruner, J.S. 1982, p. 82).

On November 28, 2012, I met with Barbara Ramirez and Jose Luis Muñoz, kindergarten teachers and parent workshop collaborators, to discuss the format of the workshop and their roles. I explained that I was first going to present the power point presentation, model the use of the Santillana Intensive English cards, and then divide the parents into three groups. Each group of parents was going to be guided by a teacher, Mr. Muñoz, Miss Ramirez, or me. Then, each teacher would once again model the use of the card and request parent volunteers to practice using the card. We also discussed to clearly emphasize that parents did not have to use English when using the cards. Furthermore, we discussed the importance of allowing parents to offer their suggestions. In addition, we would answer or attempt to answer any questions that parents might have.

Both Mr. Muñoz and Ms. Ramirez expressed enthusiasm and confidence. The three of us have used the material and are very familiar with it. Furthermore, Mr. Muñoz and I are fluent Spanish speakers. Although Ms. Ramirez is not a proficient Spanish speaker, she feels very confident with her knowledge and conversational Spanish abilities.

On December 3, 2012, I invited both Mr. Muñoz and Ms. Ramirez to my classroom so they could see me rehearse the presentation and gain a better idea of the sequence of the workshop. They commented that the power point presentation was clear and concise and that it offered clear examples and explanations of how parents could help their children develop language skills. We also reviewed the sentence frames and Ms. Ramirez took the opportunity to read the sentence frames to make sure that she was reading them correctly. Although the three of us had used the Santillana Intensive English cards, we wanted to make sure that we had a clear understanding of what we were going to present to the parents. We each reviewed the material, and we took turns practicing each of the cards' elements.

#### Development of Winter Workshop: Building Number Sense of Kindergarteners and First Graders

On December 11, 2012, the Glen City Elementary School kindergarten and first grade teachers met to discuss academic needs of the students and possible interventions. At the meeting, teachers of both grade levels indicated that the majority of students were learning the basic knowledge of identifying and counting numbers. However, teachers reported that students were still struggling with the more complex concepts of number sense. Howden (1989) described number sense as a “good intuition about numbers and their relationships.”

As a teacher, I have also witnessed how students struggle with number sense. I have experienced kindergarten, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and even 7<sup>th</sup> graders struggling with concepts of less than,

greater than, developing multiple ways of thinking and representing numbers, and place value. Therefore, I determined that number sense would be a good topic for the parent math workshop. Lack of number sense leads to poor understanding of numbers and number relations. Furthermore, children continue to count by ones when solving simple story problems and have difficulty mastering basic facts (Van De Walle, 2004, p. 119).

On December 13, 2012, I met with Mrs. Misenhimer, the school principal to share my ideas and set a date for the parent workshop. We both decided to hold the workshop on February 5, 2013. Once again, she showed great enthusiasm and willingness to help during the workshop. In addition, I met with Miss Ramirez and Mr. Muñoz as they were the only teachers who expressed willingness to assist me at the parent workshop. I informed them that I was going to plan the workshop and choose the strategies, and then would meet with them to review the workshop content, practice the math strategies, and decide which strategies they would model to the parents.

To plan the math workshop, I used the Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools. I specifically concentrated on one strand of number sense: Students understand the relationship between numbers and quantities (p. 22). This strand alone includes comparing, identifying, counting, recognizing, representing, naming, and ordering numbers. Also, I used *Elementary and Middle School Mathematics* by John A. Van De Walle as a guide to select the strategies or mathematical exercises to teach at the parent math workshop.

I selected four activities to demonstrate at the parent math workshop. All of the activities were hands on, easy to demonstrate, student and parent friendly, and multi-purpose. The activities were:

1. Roll It: At a very basic level, a child will roll a die and identify the number that the dots represent. This exercise also reinforces counting. A second exercise will be using two dice. This will require that a child compares which die is less than or greater than. A third exercise will require that the child adds the amount of dots on both dice. More than two dice could be used to increase the level of difficulty of the exercise, challenging the child. I modified this exercise from an exercise described by Van De Walle. I have used dice with my students and have noticed how engaged children become in this activity. Van De Walle describes a similar exercise using cards and counters (p. 116).
2. Find and Press: Using a calculator, children will press a given number key. This exercise will help the child identify numbers. To increase the level of difficulty and reinforce the concept of addition, a child will add two-more-than [any given number]. A child will first press  $0 + 2 =$ . Before the answer is displayed on the calculator, the child will make his/her prediction and then verify his/her answer. This exercise can be repeated when adding three-more than, four-more-than, etc. (p. 121).
3. The following activity is a slight variation of one activity described by Van De Walle. Using a three-tab-foldable, student will add 1, 2, 3, etc. more than \_\_\_\_ (any chosen number). In addition, students will represent any given number. This exercise also helps children understand the sequence of numbers and their relation to one another. To increase the level of difficulty, students can use the three-tab-foldable to add and subtract.



4. **Playing Cards:** Using playing cards students will identify a number, determine if a number is less than or greater than, or find the sum or difference when adding or subtracting.

After selecting the math activities, I proceeded to gather the materials for the workshop which would also be given to each family to take home. Based on the number of the Fall Parent Workshop and conversation with Mrs. Misenhimer, Miss Ramirez, and Mr. Muñoz, I decided to prepared 55 envelopes each containing: two dice, a calculator, a set of playing cards, a dry erase marker, a three-tab-foldable, and a list of math sentence frames in English and Spanish, as well as written instructions for each math activity. All the envelopes were prepared prior to the date of the workshop.

It should be noted that I also purchased several items to raffle among the attendees. The attendees did not pay to participate in the raffle. All of the items were educational games or items that children can use to reinforce math concepts. A total of 15 items were bought to be raffled. I conducted the raffle to increase attendance and to thank the parents for their participation. In the past, the Parent Teacher Association has conducted free raffles and more parents have attended their meetings than when they did not offer the free raffle. Therefore, I decided to use this technique to increase attendance.

Invitation flyers were sent to all English Language Learners' parents on January 24, 2013, and a reminder was sent on February 1, 2013. In addition, three posters announcing the Math Parent Workshop were hung by each school entrance on January 21, 2013.

On February 1, 2013, I met with Mr. Munoz, Miss Ramirez, and Mrs. Misenhimer to go over the content of the workshop, the math activities, and to determine which activities each one

of them wanted to present to the parents. Each one of us selected one activity, and I specifically demonstrated how each activity should be demonstrated to the parents. All of us took turns practicing by demonstrating each activity to one another. I also emphasized the importance of having the parents practice each activity by using the math sentence frames.

#### **Chapter 4: Implementation of Workshop: Language Development**

On December 5, 2012, I set up my laptop and document camera in the school cafeteria. The manila envelopes containing the cards and sentence frames were ready to be distributed as well. There were enough envelopes for at least 50 attendees. I welcomed parents and children as they entered the cafeteria. Among the attendees were two school principals and an ELD coach. All attendees signed in as they entered.

I started the workshop at 6:05 p.m. I first introduced the Glen City school principal, Mrs. Misenhimer, Mrs. Olivo, McKeveitt School's principal, Mrs. Davis, ELD coach, Mr. Muñoz, and Ms. Ramirez. I also introduced myself and thanked everyone for their presence and punctuality. I then proceeded to explain that the goal of the parent workshop was to provide ideas and specific strategies to help children develop language.

After, I explained the English Language Develop program at Santa Paula School District and began the power point presentation. At different points of the presentation, a few parents raised their hands to express their opinion, which were in agreement with the material and explanations being provided.

Immediately after the power point presentation, the parents were divided into three groups. Each group was guided by a teacher. First, teachers explained each component of the cards: Vocabulary, reading passage, grammar component, writing component. We focused on the

components that parents could use such as the vocabulary and mini story. We also modeled how to encourage children to speak by using the sentence frames. Examples of sentence frames included: He is \_\_\_\_\_. She is \_\_\_\_\_. It is \_\_\_\_\_. It is under the \_\_\_\_\_. The sentence frames were provided in English and Spanish. The sentence frames were provided in Spanish because parents can still support language development in their own language. However, the ELD committee wanted to make sure that the proper academic language is reinforced.

A key feature of the parent workshop was the parents practicing using the cards. Several parents volunteered to practice to make sure that they had a good understanding of the proper usage of the Santillana Intensive English cards. Overall, the parents commented that they felt confident using the cards. I observed that parents were using the sentence frames and asking their own questions. Some parents simply looked at the illustrations and began interacting with their children or practicing with other parents in the group. Several parents commented that the cards' illustrations gave them ideas of topics to discuss with their children. Many parents also shared that the ideas on how to develop and elicit language were simple to implement.

A parent inquired about how she could use the card and the sentence frames since she did not know how to read or write. The parent inquiries reminded me about Gaitan's work, which points out that English Language Learners' parents face specific challenges because they might have few education experiences and skills (2004). This presented a perfect opportunity to explain to parents that just by looking at the card, we could gain an understanding of what was happening in the illustration and develop a conversation about it. Furthermore, by explaining how to use the illustrations, I provided simple information and ideas that parents can use at home and which could lead to academic growth (Epstein, 2009).

It is important to note that parents expressed that they had no knowledge or very little knowledge of the English Language Development program. Furthermore, parents expressed that they did not know the statutory and academic implications of being an English Language Learner.

I urged the parents to use the cards, and when finished return them to the school office. I informed the parents that new envelopes containing different cards would be available for them. The workshop ended at 6:53 p.m. Before leaving the workshop, parents completed a short questionnaire about the workshop. I explained to them that their honest responses would help me evaluate the effectiveness of the workshop and plan for future workshops. I thanked all those in attendance and invited them to the next parent workshop in February.

#### **Implementation of the Math Parent Workshop:**

I divided the lunch tables in the cafeteria into four distinct areas so parents could be divided into four groups. Also, I set up the projector and laptop. The materials and items to be raffled were all set on a table ready for distribution. Mrs. Misenhimer also set up the sound system prior to start of the workshop.

I welcomed parents at the door and requested them to sign in. I also handed out a raffle ticket to each parent as they entered. At 6:00 p.m., I started the workshop by welcoming all attendees, which included parents, the first grade or kindergarten students, and in some cases, siblings too. After, I introduced the principal, my colleagues, and myself. Following introductions, I started the Power Point presentation which consisted of an explanation of what number sense is, its importance, and a comparison of number sense concepts taught in kindergarten and first grade.

Immediately after, I explained that I was going to divide them into four groups, and that by working in small groups, they were going to have an opportunity to practice the activities and ask questions. Furthermore, I explained that each group would rotate so that each teacher and Mrs. Misenhimer would teach one math activity. Each parent was given an envelope and was instructed to go to a group according to their assigned number.

When all parents were in their groups, I set a timer and each group leader, teacher, and principal began demonstrating the activity. Then, we requested parent volunteers to practice the activity. This was the most exciting part of the night as many parents volunteered. At the end of 10 minutes, the timer went off indicating that each group needed to rotate. Each group continued to work until all four rotations were completed.

At the end of the rotations, parents were asked to fill out a brief questionnaire about the workshop. After collecting the questionnaires, we conducted the raffle. Finally, I thanked all attendees for their participation and enthusiasm. The workshop ended at 7:07 p.m.

### **Chapter 5: Results of Workshops**

Prior to the parent workshop, many staff members expressed that the ELD workshop for parents was a good idea and wished me, “Good luck.” Many teachers believed that parents were not going to show up. This belief was based on prior results of poor parental attendance to meetings. However, I did not share this belief because I had spoken to several parents of kindergarten and first grade students. I had personally invited them and talked about the workshops’ content. All the parents demonstrated interest and several promised that they would attend the workshop. In addition, I had sent flyers in advance and hung a couple of posters informing parents about the event.

On the day of the ELD workshop, 33 families, parents and children, attended the event. This was a good turn-out. All the attendees stayed for the duration of the workshop and were active participants. They listened carefully, asked questions, gave examples of how they converse with their children, and participated when modeling the usage of the Santillana Intensive English cards.

The parents' attendance and participation demonstrate that some parents are willing to participate in school activities which will give them strategies to help their children develop academic knowledge. Therefore, the school leadership should provide more opportunities to increase parental involvement aiming at improving students' academic success.

All attendees either strongly agreed or agreed that the information and strategies were useful and that they will use the material with their children. They also strongly agreed that they would participate in other workshops and that they would inform other parents about the workshops. Finally, they strongly agreed or agreed that the information was presented in order and that I was knowledgeable about the information and strategies presented.

The following table includes the parents' responses on the evaluation requested at the end of the workshop. Since all the attendees were Spanish only speakers, the evaluation form was given in Spanish only.

## Glen City Elementary School English Language Parent Workshop

## Taller del Desarrollo del Language/Language Development Workshop

	Completamente de Acuerdo/Strongly Agree	De Acuerdo Agree	No estoy de acuerdo Disagree	Completamente desapruebo Completely Disagree
La información fue presentada en orden/The information was presented in order	33			
La información fue interesante y de uso/The information was interesting and useful	26	7		
Aprendí nuevas estrategias para ayudar a mi hijo/a/learned new strategies to help my child	33			
Voy a usar la información y el material con mi hijo/a/I will use the information and material	33			
Aprendí algo nuevo del programa de ELD/I learned something new about the ELD program	33			
Voy a asistir a otro taller e invitar a otras personas/I will attend another workshop as well as invite others	33			
La presentadora esta informada del tema y estrategias/The presenter was knowledgeable on the topic and strategies	33			

**Math: Number Sense**

I was pleased to see the many parents and children who attended the math workshop.

When I started to see the numerous attendees, I became nervous because I thought that I was not going to have enough materials to distribute. Prior to the workshop, I had prepared 55 envelopes.

All envelopes were distributed to parents, and as I was saying good bye to the attendees, I received three requests for materials.

The Power Point presentation showed a comparison of what kindergarten students and first grade students learn in the area of Number Sense. Parents were surprised to learn how much academic material kindergarten students are expected to know, and were astonished to see how much more academic material is covered in first grade. I emphasized that I was only presenting information on Number Sense and that more mathematical concepts are presented and studied in kindergarten.

At this point, parents were eager to find out how they could help their children better understand numbers. Therefore, we proceeded to work in groups where each group leader, teachers and school principal, modeled an activity, explained the importance of the activity, and answered any questions the parents might have had. After the modeling of the activity, we asked parents to practice the activity with their children. The parents who did not have their children with them practiced with another parent.

The section where parents practiced the activity with their children or with other parents was very rewarding for me as the creator of the workshop. Parents and children were interacting with each other and using the proper academic vocabulary which was used in the sentence frames that were also provided to the attendees. We were all having fun, and I personally heard parents and children saying, "This is fun." Children were smiling even when they made mistakes.

Before holding the raffle, I asked the parents to answer a questionnaire about the workshop. Once again, I informed the parents that their answers would help me evaluate the workshop and plan for future workshops or activities.



The following table contains the questionnaire presented to the parents and the total amount of responses for each session.

### Glen City Elementary School Math Workshop: Kindergarten and First Grade Number Sense

By/por Ana M. Rodriguez

	Completamente de Acuerdo/Absolutely Agree	De Acuerdo/Agree	No estoy de acuerdo/I don't agree	Completamente desapruebo-I completely disagree
La información fue presentada en orden/The information was presented sequentially.	61			
La información fue interesante y de uso/The information was interesting and useful	55	6		
Aprendí nuevas estrategias para ayudar a mi hijo/a/I learned new strategies to help my child	61			
Voy a usar la información y el material con mi hijo/a/I will use the information and material to work with my child	61			
Aprendí algo nuevo del programa de matemáticas/I learned something new about the math standards	61			
Asistiría a otro taller e invitaría a otras personas/I would attend and invite other people to a workshop	58	3		
La presentadora está informada del tema y estrategias/The presenter was informed about the topic and strategies	61			

The parents' answers clearly show that they believed the information and strategies were informative and useful. They also indicate that parents are willing to participate in future

workshops and activities that will enhance their knowledge and information about their children's education.

### **Chapter 6: Conclusion/Next Steps**

As a teacher, I understand the importance of parental involvement. I believe that when there is collaboration between the school and families, the school experience is enhanced and the children are the direct beneficiaries of such partnership. This belief has been reinforced in my years of teaching. I have seen better academic results when I have developed a partnership with the families. The positive results have been shown in increased student participation, better attendance, increased grades, more parent communication and understanding of curricula. Therefore, I immediately was drawn to focus my project on developing parent workshops with the intention of increasing parental involvement. Furthermore, I wanted to increase parental involvement by facilitating different academic activities that parents could use at home to help support their children learning (Gaitan, 2004 and Epstien, 2009).

One of the struggles that I faced during the process of planning the parent workshops was the lack of staff participation. Many members of the teaching staff expressed that they had responsibilities with their families; therefore, they could not return to school to participate in the workshops. To solve this problem, I will propose to the school principal the possibility of offering workshops during the school day. This will provide an opportunity for teaching staff to offer workshops. Furthermore, we would be targeting parents who do not work during the day and can consequently attend the day workshops.

The classrooms teachers would be relieved by substitutes. These substitutes would be paid by the district funds already appropriated for parental involvement in the school district

master plan. I would highly promote three workshops during the school year, one workshop at the start of each trimester. I would also propose that two grade levels work together, e.g., kindergarten and first grade, second and third grade, and fourth and fifth grade. The reason for pairing the grades in such a manner is because of the similarities in the curriculum. Furthermore, parents could preview the material or academic standards that their children would be covering the following academic year.

Another area where I wish to improve or enhance is having the ability to offer the workshops to all parents, not just those of English Language Learners. This is needed because English Only students can also improve their academic scores and, at the present time, parent involvement is low. By providing the same parental involvement opportunities to English Only parents, the school could strengthen its partnership with English Only families too.

Also, I will archive all workshops' information and materials for future use either by me or other staff members. The archival of the workshops' information and material would reduce the amount of work needed to plan and prepare for the workshops. Having the workshop information could also motivate other staff members to facilitate the workshops.

Finally, I would strongly urge the school leadership and staff to offer opportunities, such as the parent workshops I held. We, school staff and leadership, cannot just expect parental involvement. We must foster it. However, changes will be difficult, if not impossible, if the school leader does not do anything to change the mental models that the majority of staff holds of parents.

“Mental Models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action (Senge, 2007, The

Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership, p. 8). The current principal is an experienced administrator who has been in the Santa Paula Elementary School District for over 20 years.

However, this is her first year at Glen City Elementary School, and she is just learning the mental models that the majority of the staff holds in regards to parents. Because these mental models are so negative and erroneous, it is the responsibility of the leadership to create “a shared vision of the future we seek to create” (Senge, 2007) in our school.

A future that seeks the academic and personal growth of our students cannot include a negative perception of our parents. Assuming that parents will not attend workshops or any other school activity and not become active participants will not lead to greater parental involvement. As a result, the school leader needs to develop a shared vision. This process might require educating the staff about the different models of parental involvement and how it can be improved.

The two parent workshops that I held were successful because I had one specific goal: increase parental involvement by providing information and strategies that parents could use to support their children’s education. Above all, the parents were treated with respect. I never doubted the participation of the parents. Instead, every action that I took supported my belief that parents were going to attend the workshops. I carefully planned the activities, involved other staff members, and publicized the workshops well. This last step was vital. Flyers went out to the parents on two different occasions and e-mails were sent to the teachers reminding them to pass out the flyers to their students. The event was also added to the monthly school calendar, posters were displayed by each school gate and in the kindergarten area, and I personally invited many parents. In the past, parents have told me that they have not attended school events because they

did not know about them. Therefore, I did what I could to make sure that the parents knew about the event.

The parents' participation in the workshops was very positive. It was also an indication that parents are involved in their children's education. However, schools' staff plays a vital role in guiding parents in the kind of parental involvement that is needed in our schools. At Glen City Elementary School, parents need to know the academic requirements and specific ways that they can support their children's education. It is my intention to continue facilitating workshops, so parents can further enrich their children's learning.

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