

2013

# "My Name is Alejandro!" The Importance of Children's Names to Cultural Identity and Early Literacy Development

AnnMarie Alberton Gunn  
gunn@mail.usf.edu

Alejandro E. Brice  
aebrice@mail.usf.edu

Barbara J. Peterson

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digital.usfsp.edu/fac\\_publications](https://digital.usfsp.edu/fac_publications)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Gunn, A.A., Brice, A.E., & Peterson, B.J. (2013). "My name is Alejandro!" The importance of children's names to cultural identity and early literacy development. Presentation at the Florida Reading Association Conference.

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Scholarly Works at Digital USFSP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital USFSP.

**Presentation Title:**

***My Name is Alejandro! The Importance of Children's Names to Cultural Identity and Early Literacy Development***

**Presenters:** Dr. AnnMarie Alberton Gunn, Asst. Professor, USFSP      gunn@usfsp.edu  
Dr. Alejandro Brice, Professor, USFSP      aebrice@usfsp.edu  
Barbara Peterson, Doctoral Candidate, USF – Tampa      bpeterso@mail.usf.edu

**LIST OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE THAT FEATURE NAMES**

\* Titles with asterisks are multicultural books.

~ Titles marked with a tilde (~) feature names in a manner that reinforces early literacy skills: name awareness, name writing, rhyming, sound awareness, alliteration, letter/sound association and ABC concepts, or other phonological awareness skills. Cultural identity may or may not be an additional focus of these texts.

Other titles relate to the idea of name, individual identity, petnames/nicknames, name origins etc.

**Children's Literature that Feature Names and Identity**

\*Ada, A. F. (1995). *My name is Maria Isabel*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers. 64 pgs.

Borden, L. (2007). *The John Hancock club*. New York, NY: Margaret K. Elderry Books. (Illustrator: Adam Gustavson). 48 pgs.

\*Brown, M. (2011). *Marisol McDonald doesn't match/Marisol McDonald no combina*. New York, NY: Children's Book Press. (Illustrator: Sara Palacios). 32 pgs. Bilingual edition.

\*Bruchac, J. (1998). *A boy called Slow*. New York, NY: Philomel Books. (Illustrator: Hocco Haviera). 32 pgs.

\*Choi, Y. (2003). *The name jar*. New York, NY: Dragonfly Books. 40 pgs.

\*Colato Lainez, R. (1996). *Rene has two last names /Rene tiene dos apellidos*. Houston, TX: Arte Publico. (Illustrator: Fabiola Graullera Ramirez). 32 pgs. Bilingual edition.

Costanza, C. (2002). *A perfect name*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers. (Illustrator: LeUyen Pham).

\*Cummings, M. *The three names of me*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company. (Illustrator: Lin Wang). 40 pgs.

Davis, M., & McBride, R. (2011). *Adelia's last name*. Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing. 24 pgs.

Dunklee, N. (2011). *My name is Elizabeth*. Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press. (Illustrator: M. Forsythe) 24 pgs.

\*EchoHawk, T. (2005). *Call me Little Echo Hawk*. Springville, UT: Cedar Fort. (Illustrator: Jim Madsen). 24 pgs.

Fosberry, J. (2010). *My name is not Isabella*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebook Jabberwocky. (Illustrator: Mike Litwin). 32 pgs. *See descriptor of book by same author, below.*

Fosberry, J. (2011). *My name is not Alexander*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebook Jabberwocky. (Illustrator: Mike Litwin). 32 pgs.

\*~Heide, F. P., & Gilliland, J. H. (1990). *The day of Ahmed's secret*. New York, NY: HarperCollins. (Illustrator: Ted Lewin). 32 pgs. (1995 reprint available)

Henkes, K. (1996). *Chrysanthemum*. New York, NY: Mulberry Books. 32 pgs. Also available in Big Book format.

\*Jackson, D. M. (2009). *The name game: A look behind the labels*. New York, NY: Penguin Young Readers Group. (Illustrator: T. Stearn) 64 pgs. [non-fiction text]

Kyuchukov, H. (2004). *My name was Hussein*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill Press.

Lesser, R. L. (2012). *My name is Rebecca Romm, named after my mother's mom*. Englewood, NJ: Laredo Publishing. (Illustrator: S. Lee). 32 pgs.

Lester, H. (1989). *A porcupine named Fluffy*. San Enselmo, CA: Sandpiper Press. (Illustrated by Lynne Munsinger) 32 pgs.

\*~Recorvits, H. (2003). *My name is Yoon*. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. (Illustrator: Gabi Swiatkowska). 32 pgs. Winner of the Bank Street Award; Ezra Keats Illustrator Award.

Root, P. (2003). *The name quilt*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. (Illustrator: Margot Apple). 32 pgs. Available from used book sellers; this book might be available through your public library.

Sheinmel, C. (2012). *Stella Batt needs a new name*. Ann Arbor, MI: Sleeping Bear Press. (Illustrator: J. Bell). 144 pgs.

\*~Wells, R. (2008). *Yoko writes her name*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children. 32 pgs.

\*Williams, K. L., & Mohammed, K. (2009). *My name is Sangoel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers. (Illustrator: C. Stock). 36 pgs.

Williams, S. (1996). *Mommy doesn't know my name*. Boston, MA: HMH Books for Young Readers. (Illustrated by A. Shachat) 48 pgs.

\*Yang, B. (2004). *Hannah is my name: A young immigrant's story*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 40 pgs.

\*Yolen, J.(2008). *Naming Liberty*. Philomel. (Illustrator: Jim Burke). 32 pgs.

### **Other Name-Based Children's Literature for Teaching Early Literacy Skills**

~Bayer, J. E. (1992). *A, my name is Alice*. New York, NY: Puffin. (Illustrator: Steven Kellogg) 32 pgs.

~Burke, M. M. (2003). *A, My name is Andrew*. Gilroy, CA: All About Kids Publishing. (Illustrator: D. Ingemanson) 40 pgs.

~dePaola, T. (1973). *Andy that's my name*. New York, NY: Aladdin. (1999 paperback edition available). 32 pgs.

~Hayes, L. (2002). *My name starts with A*. Carmel Valley, CA: Inspire Publications. (Illustrator: A. Anderson). 32 pgs. This is one in a series of alphabet books.

~Lass, B., & Sturges, P. (2000). *Who took the cookies from the cookie jar?* New York, NY: Little Brown Books for Young Readers. (Illustrator: Ashley Wolff). 32 pgs. [see name-games and songs for early literacy learning]

~Lobel, A. (1996). *Alison's zinnia*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books. 32 pgs.

~Martin, M. J. (1996). *From Anne to Zach*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press. (Illustrator: M. Grejniec). 32 pgs.

~Peek, M. (1985). *Mary wore her red dress and Henry wore his green sneakers*. New York, NY: Clarion Books. (Illustrator: James Cross Giblin). 32 pgs.

~Slate, J. (2001). *Miss Bindergarten gets ready for kindergarten*. New York, NY: Puffin. (Illustrator: Ashley Wolff). 40 pgs. Also available in big book format through Scholastic.

### **PRACTITIONER ARTICLES AND BOOKS**

Bradley, B. A., & Jones, J. (2007). Sharing alphabet books in early childhood classrooms. *Reading Teacher*, 60(5), 452-463. (See section on creating personalized alphabet books for children using digital photographs; pp. 460-461).

Brooker, L., & Woodhead, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Developing positive identities: Diversity and young children*. Milton Keynes, UK: The Open University. Retrieved from: [http://oro.open.ac.uk/16988/1/ECiF3\\_Eng\\_as\\_published.pdf](http://oro.open.ac.uk/16988/1/ECiF3_Eng_as_published.pdf)

Diller, D. (2000). *Beyond the name charts: Using children's names for word study*. Monroe, CT: Really Good Stuff Publishing. <http://www.reallygoodstuff.com/beyond-the-names-chart-book/p/303482/>

Goldstein, B. S. (1984). What's in a name? Beginning reading! *The Reading Teacher*, 37(9), 911.

Grady, C. (2010). What's in a name? *Language Arts*, 87(5), 911.

- Gunn, A. A., Brice, A., & Peterson, B. J. (2013, November). Culturally-responsive teaching: Exploring children's names and cultural identities. *Childhood Education* (in-press).
- Kirk, E. W., & Clark, P. (2005). Beginning with names: Using children's names to facilitate early literacy learning. *Childhood Education*, 81(3), 139-144.
- Krech, G. (1990). *Teaching with kid's names*. New York, NY: Scholastic Professional Books.
- Livingston, N., & Kurkjian, C. (2005). Circles and celebrations: Learning about other cultures through literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(7), 696–703.
- McNair, J. (2007). Using children's names to enhance early literacy development young children. *Young Children*, 62(5), 84-89.
- Meller, W., Richardson, D., & Hatch, J. A. (2009). Using read-alouds with critical literacy literature in K-3 classrooms. *Young Children*, 64(6), 76-78.
- Morgan, H. (2008). Teaching tolerance and reaching diverse students through the use of children's books. *Childhood Education*, 85(2), 106-G-106-P.
- Souto-Manning, M. (2009). Negotiating culturally responsive pedagogy through multicultural children's literature: Towards critical democratic literacy practices in a first grade classroom. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 9(1), 53-77.
- Souto-Manning, M. (2007). Immigrant families and children (re)develop identities in a new context. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(6), 399-405.
- Wagstaff, J. (2009). *Using name walls to teach reading and writing*. New York, NY: Scholastic Teaching Resources. 128 pgs.

## SCHOLARLY REFERENCES

- Banks, J. A. (2003). Levels of integration of multicultural content. Retrieved from <http://resources.css.edu/DiversityServices/docs/LevelsofIntegrationofMulticulturalContent.pdf>
- Barajas, H., & Pierce, J. (2001). The significance of race and gender in school success among Latinas and Latinos in college. *Gender and Society*, 15, 859-878.
- Both-de Vries, A. C., & Bus, A. G. (2010). The proper name as starting point for basic reading skills. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 23, 173-187.
- Bloodgood, J. (1999). What's in a name? Children's name writing and name acquisition. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 34, 342–367.
- Clark, E., H. (2007). *"I'm a product of everything I've been through": A narrative study of the cultural Identity construction of Bosnian Muslim female refugee students*. Dissertation, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.

- Conrad, N., Gong, Y., Sipp, L., & Wright, L. (2004). Using text talk as a gateway to culturally responsive teaching. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 31(3), 187-192.
- Creese, A., Bhatt, A., Bhojani, N., & Martin, P. (2006). Multicultural, heritage and learner identities in complementary schools. *Language and Education*, 20(1), 23-43.
- Devos, T., Blanco, K., Muñoz, C., Dunn, R., & Ulloa, E. (2008). Implicit orientation toward family and school among bilingual Latino college students. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 148(4), 449-472.
- Erickson, F. (1987). Transformation and school success: The politics and culture of educational achievement. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 18, 335-356.
- Guglielmi, R., S. (2012). Math and science achievement in English language learners: Multivariate latent growth modeling of predictors, mediators, and moderators. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104(3), 580-602.
- Lambert, W. (1973, November). *Culture and language as factors in learning and education*. Paper presented at the Annual Learning Symposium on Cultural Factors in Learning, Bellingham, Washington.
- Plaza-Coral, D., A. (1998). *Australian Spanish-speaking background secondary school students and the construction and reconstruction of their cultural identity: A "wog" experience*. Dissertation, University of Wollongong, Australia.
- Matute-Bianchi, M. (1986). Ethnic identities and patterns of school success and failure among Mexican-descent and Japanese-American students in a California high school: An ethnographic analysis. *American Journal of Education*, 95(1), 233-255.
- Schwartz, S. J., Zamboanga, B. L., Rodriguez, L., & Wang, S. C. (2007). The structure of cultural identity in an ethnically diverse sample of emerging adults. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 29(2), 159-173.
- Underwood, P. (2009). *Effects of culturally-responsive teaching practices on first grade students' reading comprehension and vocabulary gains*. Dissertation, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.
- Welsch, J. G., Sullivan, A., & Justice, L. M. (2003). That's my letter!: What preschoolers' name writing representations tell us about emergent literacy knowledge. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 35(2), 757-776.
- Wlodkowski, R., & Ginsberg, M. (1995). A framework for culturally responsive teaching. *Educational Leadership*, September, 17-21.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

### Names and Cultural/Personal Identity Lesson Ideas

READWRITETHINK website – *Acrostic Poems: All About Me and My Favorite Things*

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/acrostic-poems-about-favorite-309.html>

Scholastic Website – *What’s in a Name?* Back to School Literacy Unit (A. Zimmerman). This webpage offers lesson plan ideas for researching name origins, thematic read-alouds of books that feature children’s names, and creating of individual students’ name books. <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/post/what%E2%80%99s-name-back-school-literacy-unit>

What’s In My Name? Lesson plan

<http://schooltalkdev.palmbeach.k12.fl.us/groups/digitalhub/wiki/1cd1d/>

Scholastic Website - *Explore Your Culture Through Storytelling*. In this lesson, students explore their cultural backgrounds and create a poetry book based on the George Ella Lyons poem, “Where I’m From” <http://www.scholastic.com/browse/lessonplan.jsp?id=788>

Critical Multicultural Awareness - Multicultural Pavilion website. This webpage describes a language arts activity where students write their naming stories and share as a group. The site provides some guidelines and suggestions for sharing. <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/name.html>

*My Name is not Isabella!* Lesson activities that accompany this children’s book by J. Fosberry (see book list) <http://www.burkinsandyaris.com/back-to-school-lessons-and-titles-for-each-reading-standard-standard-9/>

*The Name Jar* Lesson plan ideas

<http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Issues/Antiracism/TheOriginOfNames.pdf>

<http://pbskids.org/lions//parentsteachers/pdf/RABC2-TheNameJar.pdf>

Math-based lesson ideas using *The Name Jar* and other name-based literature.

Sites for researching the meaning behind names:

<http://www.behindthename.com/>

### Early Literacy Lesson Plans and Activities with Children’s Names

READWRITETHINK Website - *What’s in a name? Concepts of letters and words.*

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/what-name-teaching-concepts-37.html>

READWRITETHINK Website - *Name Talk: Exploring Letter-Sound Knowledge in the Primary Classroom*

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/name-talk-exploring-letter-3.html>

READWRITETHINK Website – *Using Songwriting to Build Awareness of Beginning Letter Sounds*  
<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/using-songwriting-build-awareness-274.html>

READWRITETHINK Website - *Playing Name Bingo with Chrysanthemum*  
<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/playing-name-bingo-with-224.html>

Name Bingo Lesson Plan <http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=21398>

Keen on Kindergarten website – Learning with Names. Literature and early literacy stations ideas that feature children's names <http://keenonkindergarten.blogspot.com/2011/09/learning-with-names.html>

Twiggle Magazine. Lesson activities to accompany the children's book, *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* <http://www.twigglemagazine.com/August-activities/miss-bindergarten-gets-ready-for-kindergarten-literacy-lesson.html>

Lesson Plan involving children's names and A. Lobel's book, *Alison's Zinnia*.  
<http://linguistics.byu.edu/resources/lp/lplit28.html>

Create class books that feature children's names:

<http://www.pre-kpages.com/classbooks/>

[http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly\\_act/act\\_2010/07\\_Jul/pg02.html](http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly_act/act_2010/07_Jul/pg02.html)

<http://www.kinderbykim.com/september.htm>

Numerous Name-based Emergent Literacy activities on these links:

<http://literacyconnection.wcpss.net/images/forms/Letter%20Learning%20with%20Names.pdf>

[http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/abcs\\_and\\_names.html](http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/abcs_and_names.html)

<http://fun-a-day.com/names-in-preschool/>

<http://handsonaswegrow.com/35-name-activities-for-preschoolers/>

<http://www.makinglearningfun.com/themepages/NameRecognitionTheme.htm>

[http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly\\_act/act\\_2010/07\\_Jul/pg03.html](http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly_act/act_2010/07_Jul/pg03.html)

<http://www.hummingbired.com/name.htm>

<http://handsonaswegrow.com/35-name-activities-for-preschoolers/>

<http://rainbowswithinreach.blogspot.ca/2012/08/helper-charts-name-games.html>

<http://www.kidscount1234.com/name.html>



<http://readwithmeabc.blogspot.com/2013/08/b2s-name-activities.html>

<http://www.kinderkorner.com/names.html>

<http://www.pre-kpages.com/teaching-names-in-preschool/>

<http://www.jmeacham.com/name.game.htm> Investigate the individual links on this website

<http://primarypointe.blogspot.com/2012/07/nine-nifty-name-activities.html> Another good website resource -- a few technology ideas like using the Graphic Organizer tool in Comic life to upload a picture, name, and other things related to a child.

[www.wordle.com](http://www.wordle.com) and [www.tagxedo.com](http://www.tagxedo.com) Use these word cloud generators using Children's All About Me passages or Name poetry: <http://www.makeandtakes.com/all-about-me-wordle-for-kids>

See your name in Braille translator tool <http://www.braillebug.org/thenamegame.asp>

### **Name Games, Songs, and Poems**

Raffi Song: *Like Me and You*. This song features children's names and the places around the world where they come from; message of appreciation of diversity and commonality. This song is on the Raffi Concert album. Link to lyrics: [http://lyrics.wikia.com/Raffi:Like\\_Me\\_And\\_You](http://lyrics.wikia.com/Raffi:Like_Me_And_You)

Early Childhood circle time songs that build language and feature children's names

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEWkjVYhE6A>

Lots of songs and poems on these websites:

<http://www.kinderkorner.com/names.html>

<http://www.state.lib.la.us/empowerlibrary/songs%20about%20names.pdf>

<http://voices.yahoo.com/preschool-songs-spelling-names-2084264.html>

[http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly\\_act/act\\_2010/07\\_Jul/](http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly_act/act_2010/07_Jul/)

[http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly\\_act/act\\_2010/07\\_Jul/pg01.html](http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly_act/act_2010/07_Jul/pg01.html)

***Who Took the Cookie from the Cookie Jar?*** This book can be sung as a song/chant with different children's names substituted into the song. <http://supersimplelearning.com/songs/original-series/two/who-took-the-cookie/>

This site has printable cookie templates, but the cookies are all the same. Consider having children design their own cookies and put them in a cookie jar. Children can design people-shaped gingerbread cookies with their own face and clothing. Cookies can also have photos of children's faces and names. <http://mrsgilchristsclass.blogspot.com/2011/08/who-stole-cookie-from-cookie-jar.html>