**María G. Leija, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching

Early Childhood/Elementary Education

One UTSA Circle

San Antonio, TX 78249

Cell: (512) 539-8107

Email: [maria.leija@utsa.edu](mailto:maria.leija@utsa.edu)

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0882-5333

***Curriculum Vitae***

**Education BackGROUND**

Ph.D. May 2017, Curriculum and Instruction, Bilingual/Bicultural Education, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX

Emphasis area: elementary Latina/o preservice and in-service teachers’ pedagogical literacy practices in Spanish/English bilingual classrooms.

Dissertation title: *Interactive Read Alouds: Developing Literacy in Bilingual Second Grade Classrooms*

M.A. 2007, Bilingual Education.

Boise State University, Boise, ID

B.A. 2003, Bilingual Education, ESL.

Boise State University, Boise, ID

**Certification**

Certified Teacher of General Education (K-8), State of Idaho, May 2003.

English as a Second Language Certificate, State of Idaho.

Bilingual Education Certificate, State of Idaho.

**Professional EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

2019- Current **Assistant Professor**, Early Childhood/Elementary Education, Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching, College of Education and Human Development, The University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, TX.

2017- 2019 **Assistant Professor**, Bilingual and Literacy Studies, College of Education and P-16 Integration, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

*Undergraduate Level Courses*

READ 3350 Literature & Disciplinary Learning in the Elementary School

READ 3320 Early Literacy Development

*Graduate Level Courses*

RLIT 6305 Conducting Literacy Research (online synchronous)

RLIT 6311 Crossing Borders with Literature for Young People (online)

RLIT 6329 Literacy Assessment & Decision-making (online synchronous)

RLIT 6345 Transnational & Immigrant Literacies (online synchronous)

2015- 2017 **Instructor & Teachers Educating All Multilingual Students (TEAMS) Grant Coordinator**, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR.

*Undergraduate Level Courses*

ED 456 Strategies for Teaching Language Arts and Social Studies

ED 483 Developmental Reading

ED 479/579 Linguistics for ESOL/Bilingual Teachers

ED 472/572 Foundations of ESOL/Bilingual Education

Supervised Teacher Candidates

TEAMS Grant, from the U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition, supports inservice teachers in obtaining an ESOL endorsement

2009- 2015 **Assistant Instructor, Teaching Assistant, Facilitator, and Graduate Research Assistant**, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

*Undergraduate Level Courses*

EDC 340E Latino Children’s Literature for the Bilingual Learner

EDC 670EB Reading/Language Arts Methods

ALD 330 Language in Education

EDC 340D Methods of Teaching Spanish

ALD 325 Second Language Acquisition

EDC 370E Teaching English as a Second Language Methods

EDC 331 School Organization/Classroom Management

Supervised Preservice Teachers

Graduate Research Assistant, *Project ESTRE2LLA*, a model demonstration project focusing on Response to Intervention (RtI) for English Language Learners (ELLs)

2008 – 2009 **Teacher**, Bilingual First Grade 50/50 Dual Language Program, Served on the Dual Language Committee Bellevue Elementary, Bellevue, ID

2006 – 2008 **Teacher**, Bilingual & Regular Kindergarten, Assisted in Planning and Implementation of an 80/20 Dual Language Program, Hosted Student Teachers, Taught ELL Adults

Reed Elementary, Kuna, ID

2004 – 2006 **Teacher**, First Grade

Sacajawea Elementary, Caldwell, ID

2003 – 2004 **Teacher**, Sixth & Seventh Grade, Science, Math, and Language Arts

Syringa Middle School, Caldwell, ID

**AWARDS AND HONORS**

2025 Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award, UTSA Graduate School, $2,000

2025 Teaching Excellence Award Nominee, UTSA

2025 Equity in Education Writing Retreat, $1,000

2022 2021 Early Career Reviewer Award, *Bilingual Research Journal*

2021-2023 Professional Dyads and Culturally Relevant Teaching (PDCRT), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), $2,675

2021 Ethnic Studies Educators’ Academy (ESEA), $1,000

2018-2020 Cultivating New Voices Among Scholars of Color (CNV) Fellow, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), $1,200

2018 Graduate Research Assistant, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

2018 Travel Award, Faculty Travel Support Program, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, $800

2018 Summer Writing Program, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, $500

2018 Travel Award, Faculty Travel Support Program, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, $800

2017 Travel Award, Faculty Travel Support Program, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, $600

2017 Faculty Mini-research Grant, Project: *Reflections on Teacher Education Practices of First-Year Tenure Track Professors at an HSI*, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, $1,200

2016 Travel Award, Ethnicity, Race, and Multilingualism Committee, Literacy Research Association (LRA), $600

2011 Alba A. Ortiz and James R. Yates President's Associates Endowment, $1,000

2010 Travel Stipend, Division G Graduate Student Committee, American Educational Research Association (AERA), $200

**Research/Scholarly Summary**

**Published Refereed Journal Articles**

\*denotes graduate student collaboration

Lara, G., Yazan, B., Solís, J., Lindahl, K., McConnell, J., & **Leija, M. G**. (2025). “You have a master’s degree, but you speak so ghetto”: Secondary content area teachers navigating raciolinguistic ideologies. *Urban Education (0)0,* 1-37.

Google Scholar Citations: 2

Johnson, W. F., Vlach, S. K., & **Leija, M. G.** (2024). Enacting reading comprehension: Using diverse literature to engage children’s critical, sociopolitical knowledge. *Reading Research Quarterly 60(1),* 1-22.

Google Scholar Citations: 1

**Leija, M. G.,** Guerra, M. J., & Lewis, B. A. (2023). Día de los Muertos: Recognizing heterogeneity in Latinx cultural knowledge. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26390043.2023.2235343>

**Leija, M. G.** & Ramírez, R. (2023). Culturally sustaining interdisciplinary biography project: Pedagogical practices of a third-grade teacher. *Journal of Bilingual Education Research and Instruction, Special Issue,* 3-19.

**Leija, M. G.**, Martinez, M., & DeJulio, S. (2023). Beyond leveled readers: Finding engaging books to support beginning readers. *Texas Journal for Literacy Educators, 10(1)*, 8-24. Google Scholar Citations: 2

DeJulio, S., Martinez, M., & **Leija, M. G.** (2022). Exploring books for beginning readers: Comparing leveled readers and Geisel award books. *Early Childhood Education Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-022-01422-2>

Google Scholar Citations: 2

**Leija, M. G.** (2020). Día de los muertos: Opportunities to foster writing and reflect

students’ cultural practices. *The Reading Teacher,* (73)4, 543-548.

Google Scholar Citations: 11

Fregoso Bailon, R. O., Lara, G. P., & **Leija, M. G.** (2019). The idea of Latin American unity from the perspective of peripheral middle school. *Revista Tempos e Espacos em Educacao,* (12)31, 145-164. [Research Line: 1] Google Scholar Citations: 5

Fránquiz, M. E., **Leija, M. G.,** & Salinas, C. S. (2019). Challenging damaging ideologies: Are

dual language education practices addressing learners’ linguistic rights?. *Theory into Practice 58(2),* 134-144.

Google Scholar Citations: 41

Fránquiz, M. E., **Leija, M. G.,** & Garza, I. (2015). “Figuring” bidirectional home and school

connections along the biliteracy continuum. *Bilingual Research Journal,* 38(2), 152-171. Google Scholar Citations: 34

Lara, G. P., & **Leija, M. G.** (2014). Discussing gender roles and equality by reading Max: The stubborn little wolf. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, *27* (2), 22-25.

Google Scholar Citations: 12

**Published Book Chapters**

**Leija, M. G.**, \*Cardona, L., & García-Rodríguez, R. (Accepted, 2025).Día de los muertos: Developing diverse students’ bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism. In L. Murray & V. Jackson (Eds.) *Perspectives and provocations volume IV: Heart, hope, & humanity* (Fourth Edition). Emerald Publishing.

\*Cardona, L. & **Leija, M. G.** (Accepted, 2025). Culturally sustaining interactive read-alouds as a social justice practice for developing students’ vocabulary and language*.* In I. M. Escamilla, I. Alanís, & D. Meier (Eds.), *Children’s picture books and social justice and equity: Transformative literacy education in preschool and kindergarten.* Teachers College Press.

Fránquiz, M. E., & **Leija, M. G.** (2023). Funds of knowledge and funds of identity: Lenses for building language and literacy. In R. J. Tierney, F. Rizvi, & K. Erkican (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education (Fourth Edition)* (pp. 159-167). Elsevier.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-818630-5.07010-X>

Google Scholar Citations: 1

**Leija, M. G.** & Fránquiz, M. E. (2021). Building bridges between school and home: Teacher, parents, and students examining Latinx immigrant experiences. In G. Onchwari & S. Keengwe (Eds.), *Bridging family-teacher relationships for ELL and immigrant students* (pp. 100-121). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-4712-0>

Google Scholar Citations: 3

**Leija, M. G.,** Lara, G. P., Aponte-Safe, G., & Kambara, H. (2020). Reflections on teacher education practices of first-year tenure-track professors at an HSI. In J. M. Schall, P. A. McHatton & E. L. Sáenz (Eds.), *Teacher education at Hispanic-serving institutions: Exploring identity, practice, and culture*. (pp. 21-36). Routledge.

Google Scholar Citations: 5

Fránquiz, M. E., **Leija, M. G.,** & Salinas, C. (2020). Challenging damaging ideologies. In J. F. Christian & C. R. Pablo (Eds.), *Dual language education in the US: Rethinking pedagogy, curricula, and teacher education to support dual language learning for all* (pp. 72-84). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367853242>

Google Scholar Citations: 1

**Under REview**

**Leija, M. G**., Lara, G. P., Ek, L. D., \*Vargas, K., & \*Zepeda, M. (under review). Is migra a word in English: Language brokering and Latinx literacy. *Journal of Literacy Research.*

Vlach, S. K., **Leija, M. G.,** &Johnson, W. F. (under review).“We read to resist.”: How critical bilingual educators prepare for justice-oriented interactive read-alouds.  *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*,"Nurturing Classroom Criticality through Justice-Oriented Picturebooks."

Lara, G., \*Vargas, K., **Leija, M. G.,** Alanís, I. & Ek, L.D. (under review). Interactive read alouds: A Space for the emergence of Spanish heterogeneity. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*

**in Preparation**

**Leija, M. G.,** \*Cardona, L., & Lara, G. P., Culturally sustaining writing workshop: Developing agentic writers. *Language Arts* Journal

**Leija, M. G**., Lara, G. P., Lindahl, K., Solís, J., Yazan, B., & \*de Oliveira Silva, A., Engaging school districts, students, parents, and educators through family literacy events.

Lara, G. P. & **Leija, M. G**., Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: Negotiating conflicting ideologies. *The Reading Teacher* Journal

**Research Reports and Other Published Materials**

Espinosa, C. M., Choi, G., Costner, S., **Leija, M. G.,** Powless, J., Rehbein, T., & Smith, H. (2024). 2024 Charlotte Huck Award for Outstanding Fiction for Children. *Language Arts*, *102*(2), 129-134. <https://login.libweb.lib.utsa.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/2024-charlotte-huck-award-outstanding-fiction/docview/3189966035/se-2?accountid=7122>

Bulatowicz, D. M., Johnson, H., Latham, I., **Leija, M. G.,** & Powless, J. (2023). 2023 Charlotte Huck award for outstanding fiction for children. *Language Arts, 101*(2), 147-152. <https://login.libweb.lib.utsa.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/2023-charlotte-huck-award-outstanding-fiction/docview/2902062903/se-2?accountid=7122>

**Scholarly Presentations**

**INVITED PRESENTATIONS**

**Leija, M.G.** (January 2025). *Sustaining Students’ Herencias, Culturas, e Idiomas Through Culturally Relevant Author Studies.* Invited presentation at the Idaho Association of Bilingual Education Annual Meeting, College of Idaho, Caldwell, ID.

**Leija, M. G.** (April 2024). *Meeting the Academic Needs of Emerging Bilingual Students.* Invited presentation in Professional Capstone, graduate course at University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA (Virtual talk).

**Leija, M. G.** (October 2023). *Día de los Muertos: Making Connections Between the Home, School, and Community.* Invited presentation in Latino Children’s Literature for the Bilingual Learner, undergraduate course at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

**Leija, M. G.** (April 2023). *Linguistic Diversity: Emerging Bilinguals’ Linguistic Rights.* Invited presentation in Professional Capstone, graduate course at University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA (Virtual talk).

**Leija, M. G.** (February 2023). *Examining Students’ Responses to Children’s Literature and Intergenerational Immigrant Experiences.* Invited presentation in Immigration Theory in Education, graduate course at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

**Leija, M. G.** (January 2023). *Bidirectional Spaces Between the Home and School.* Invited presentation in Elementary Literacy Instruction, undergraduate course at University of South Carolina, SC (Virtual talk).

**Leija, M. G.** (February 2022). *Creating Intentional Bidirectional Home and School Connections.* Invited presentation in Professional Capstone, graduate course at University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA (Virtual talk).

**Leija, M. G.** (March 2021). *Exploring Intergenerational Immigration Experiences Through Literature.* Invited presentation in Immigration Theory in Education, graduate course at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX (Virtual talk).

**Leija, M. G.** (September 2020). *Examining the Development of Bilingualism & Biliteracy: Bilingual Educators and Parents Working Together.* Invited presentation in Biliteracy Development of Young Children, graduate course at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL (Virtual talk).

**Leija, M. G.** (April 2020). *Immigration Projects: Bilingual Latinx Students Exploring Intergenerational Experiences Through Literature.* Invited presentation in Immigration Theory in Education, graduate course at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX (Virtual talk).

**Leija, M. G.** (September 2018). *“Figuring” Bidirectional Home and School Connections.* Invited presentation in Literacy and Biliteracy Development, graduate course at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

**Leija, M. G.** (April 2018). *Critical Literacy.* Invited presentation in Teaching in Diverse Classrooms, undergraduate course at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

**Leija, M. G.** (November 2016). *Developing an Immigration Unit.* Invited presentation in Developmental Reading, undergraduate course at Pacific University Oregon, Woodburn, OR.

**Leija, M. G.** (April 2015). *Second Language Acquisition.* Invited presentation in Sociocultural Influences on Learning, undergraduate course at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

**Leija, M.** **G.** & Lara, G. (November 2014). *Best Practices in Meaningful Elementary Social Studies*. Panel at the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies, Boston, MA.

**Leija, M. G.** (September 2014). *Parental Involvement Through Read Alouds.* Invited presentation in Teaching English as a Second Language Methods, undergraduate course at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

**Peer-Reviewed Professional Presentations**

**Leija, M. G**., Lara, G. P., Lindahl, K., Solís, J., Yazan, B., & \*de Oliveira Silva, A., *Caring and Reciprocity: Family Literacy Engagement through University-School Partnerships*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2025), Denver, CO.

**Leija, M. G.,** \*Cardona, L., & Lara, G. P., *Culturally Sustaining Writing Workshop: Developing Agentic Writers,* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2025), Denver, CO.

Johnson, W. F., Vlach, S. K., & **Leija, M. G.** *Culturally Sustaining Early Literacy Pedagogies and Our Futures.*Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2025), Denver, CO.

Lara, G., Yazan, B., Solís, J., Lindahl, K., McConnell, J., & **Leija, M. G**. *“You have a master’s degree, but you speak so ghetto”: Secondary content area teachers navigating raciolinguistic ideologies*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2025), Denver, CO.

\*Cardona-Berrio, L. & **Leija, M. G.** *Interactive Read Alouds as Culturally Sustaining Pathways: Culturally Sustaining Children’s Literature and its Intersections with Race and Culture,*Paper presented at the Children’s Literature Assembly Online Research Conference (February 2025), Athens, GA (Virtual conference).

**Leija, M. G**., Lara, G. P., Lindahl, K., Solís, J., Yazan, B., & \*de Oliveira Silva, A.,*University-School Partnerships: Increasing Family Literacy Engagement.* Paper presented at the Southwest Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (February 2025), San Antonio, TX.

Lara, G., Yazan, B., Solís, J., Lindahl, K., McConnell, J., & **Leija, M. G**. *“What did you say?/Can you repeat yourself? You look Chinese:” Secondary Content Teachers Navigating Raciolinguistic Ideologies.* Paper presented at the Southwest Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (February 2025), San Antonio, TX.

**Leija, M. G.,** Lara, G. P., \*Cardona, L., & Garcia Rodriguez R. *Writing Workshop: Agentic Writers Authoring Their Funds of Identity*. Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting (November 2024), Boston, MA.

Lara, G. P., **Leija, M. G.,** & \*Cardona, L. *Math and Language Arts Culturally Relevant Books: Integrating Math, Language, and Culture.* Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English-National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Joint Conference Annual Meeting (June 2024), New Orleans, LA.

**Leija, M. G.,** Lara, G. P., & \*Cardona, L. *Examining Literacy and Math Connections in Culturally Relevant Picture Books*. Paper presented at the Early Childhood Institute (April 2024), UTSA

Johnson, W. F., Vlach, S. K., & **Leija, M. G.** *Sociopolitical Comprehension Instruction: Using Multicultural Children's Literature to Engage Experiential Knowledge as Intellectual Meaning-Making.*Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2024), Philadelphia, PA.

**Leija, M. G.,** \*Cardona, L., & Garcia Rodriguez R. *Día de los Muertos: Developing Children’s Biliteracy and Making Cultural Connections*. Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting (November 2023), Columbus, OH.

**Leija, M. G.**, Lara, G. P., Ek, L. D., Lewis, B. A., Fránquiz, M. E. & Guerra, M. J. *Illuminating bilingual teachers’ pedagogies: Cultivating the languages, literacies, and identities of Latina/o/x students.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2023), Chicago, IL.

Lara, G. P., **Leija, M. G.**, Fránquiz, M. E. & \*Ochoa Ynostroza, A. *Male, Latino bilingual teacher candidates lived experiences & bilingualism*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Bilingual Education (February 2023), Portland, OR.

**Leija, M. G.** & Ek, L. D. *“Is Migra a Word in English?”: Developing Biliteracy through Classroom Language Brokering Practices*. Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting (November 2022), Anaheim, CA.

**Leija, M. G.** & Garcia Rodriguez R. *This Little Light of Mine: Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Practices in Elementary and Early Childhood Education.* Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting (November 2022), Anaheim, CA.

**Leija, M. G.** & \*Tovar, I. *Authoring Teachers’ Funds of Identity: Sustaining Dreams.* Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting (November 2022), Anaheim, CA.

**Leija, M. G.** & Garcia Rodriguez R. *Developing Immigration Literacy Units that Center Students’ Families’ Immigration Knowledge.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English Homecoming (July 2022), Louisville, KY.

\*Vargas, K. M., Ek, L. D., Lara, G. P., **Leija, M. G.**, & \*Zepeda, M. *More Than Words: How Read-Alouds Mediate Latina/o/x Emergent Bilingual Students’ Content Knowledge and Vocabulary Development*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2022), San Diego, CA.

Lara, G. P., **Leija, M. G.**, Ek, L. D., \*Vargas, K. M., & Guerra, M. J. *Biliteracy Development in Elementary Bilingual Education Classrooms*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Bilingual Education (February 2022), New York, NY.

DeJulio, S., **Leija, M. G.**, & Martinez, M. *Exploring Elements of Engagement in Texts for Beginning Readers*. Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (December 2021), Atlanta, GA.

**Leija, M. G.** *Authoring in Monolingual Anti-Racist Education Spaces.* Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting (November 2021), Louisville, KY (Virtual conference).

Ek, L. D., \*Vargas, K., **Leija, M. G.**, & Lara, G. P.*Biliteracy Development through School and University Partnerships*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Bilingual Education (April 2021), Houston, TX (Virtual conference).

**Leija, M. G.** *The Impact of Experience and Immigration.* Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (December 2020), Houston, TX (Virtual conference).

**Leija, M. G.** *Authoring Latinx Preservice Teachers’ Hidden Funds of Knowledge.* Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (December 2020), Houston, TX (Virtual conference).

**Leija, M. G.** *Confluencia de experiencia e inmigración/Confluence of Experience and Immigration.* Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting (November 2020), Denver, CO. <https://ncte.org/press/ncte-annual-convention-goes-virtual/> (Virtual conference).

**Leija, M. G.** *Exploring Día de los Muertos through Children’s Literature*. Paper presented at the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Meeting (October 2020), San Antonio, TX (Virtual conference).

**Leija, M. G.** *Latinx Preservice Teachers Authoring Bilingual Texts*. Paper presented at the American Educational Studies Association Annual Meeting (October 2020), San Antonio, TX (Conference canceled).

**Leija, M. G.** *Culturally Relevant Interactive Read Alouds: Examining Pedagogical Practices in Latinx Spaces.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2020), San Francisco, CA. <https://www.aera20.net/> (Conference canceled).

\*Rendon, B. & **Leija, M. G.** *Discussing Immigration Issues Through Children’s Literature.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the San Antonio Area Association for Bilingual Education (February 2020), San Antonio, TX.

**Leija, M. G.** *“Es valiente, agracedida y decidida”: Using Mentor Texts to Teach the Biography Genre.* Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (December 2019), Tampa, FL.

**Leija, M. G.** *Developing Bilingual Latinx Students’ Oral Language Through Interactive Read Alouds.* Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (December 2019), Tampa, FL.

**Leija, M. G.** *Second Grade Latinx Children’s Immigrant Intertextual Connections During Interactive Read-Alouds.* Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting (November 2019), Baltimore, MD.

**Leija, M. G.** *Día de los Muertos: Drawing on Lived Experiences and Developing Students’ Writing.* Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting (November 2019), Baltimore, MD.

**Leija, M. G.**, Fránquiz, M. E., & Garza, X. *Culturally Relevant Author Study: Exploring Xavier Garza’s Picture Books*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Texas Association for Bilingual Education (October 2019), Corpus Christi, TX.

**Leija, M. G.**, Lara, G. P., Kambara, H. & Aponte-Martinez, G. J. *Reflections of Teacher Education Practices of First-Year Tenure-Track Professors at a Hispanic-Serving Institution.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2019), Toronto, Canada.

**Leija, M. G.** *Code Switching in the Bilingual Classroom: Negotiating Conflicting Ideologies.* Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (November 2018), Indian Wells, CA.

Lara, G. P. & **Leija, M. G.** *Considering the Possibilities: Examinations of Preservice Teachers’ Discourse of Gender Equality and Queer Inclusion Children’s Literature.* Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (November 2018), Indian Wells, CA.

**Leija, M. G.** &Lara, G. P. *Beyond Borders: Expanding Intergenerational Learning Through Storytelling and Authoring in the Bilingual Classroom.* Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting (November 2018), Houston, TX.

**Leija, M. G.** *Read-Alouds on Immigration: Second Graders Learning About Multiple Meanings of Words.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2018), New York, NY.

Lara, G. P. & **Leija, M. G.** *Identity Texts: Literature that Affirms Intersecting Languages and Literacies.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Bilingual Education (March 2018), Albuquerque, NM.

**Leija, M. G.** & Lara, G. P. *Recognizing Heterogeneity in Latino Cultural Knowledge.* Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (December 2017), Tampa, FL.

Lara, G. P. & **Leija, M. G.** *Culturally Relevant Children’s Literature as Mentor Texts.* Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (December 2017), Tampa, FL.

**Leija, M. G.** *Using Interactive Read Alouds to Discuss Immigration Issues*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Texas Association for Bilingual Education (October 2017), McAllen, TX.

Lara, G. P. & **Leija, M. G.** *Trusting their Intuition and Experience: Latino Teachers’ Agency in the Bilingual Classroom.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2017), San Antonio, TX.

**Leija, M. G.** & Martinez, M. *Discussing Immigration Issues through Interactive Read Alouds*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Bilingual Education (February 2017), Dallas, TX.

**Leija, M. G.,** Fránquiz, M. E., & Lara, G. P. “*“Wetback” was the word they used most and they also used more offensive words”: Transformative Practices Through Interactive Read Alouds.* Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (December 2016), Nashville, TN.

Fránquiz, M. E. & **Leija, M. G.** *“Figuring” Bidirectional Home and School Connections Along the Biliteracy Continuum*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2016), Washington, D.C.

**Leija, M. G.** *Fostering Bidirectionality: Bilingual Education and Mexican Parents.* Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (December 2015), Carlsbad, CA.

**Leija, M. G.** & Lara, G. P. *Latina/o Parents' Perspectives on Inclusive Literacy Practices in a Third-Grade Bilingual Classroom.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2015), Chicago, IL.

Lara, G. P. & **Leija, M. G.** *"Es como kind of tonta": Critical Encounters in Children's Literature About Gender Equity.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2015), Chicago, IL.

Espinoza, K., Nuñez, I., **Leija, M. G.**, Chavez, D., Ibarra, K., Saldaña, M., Sifuentes, A., & Gutierrez, B. *Community and School Environmental Print: Un Mensaje a Nuestros Estudiantes.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Texas Association for Bilingual Education (October 2014), McAllen, TX.

**Leija, M. G.** *Critical Thinking and Para-Phrasing as Strategies for Bridging Literacy, Language, Cultural Knowledge and Parental Involvement*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2013), Philadelphia, PA.

**Leija, M. G.** & Martinez, M. *Integrating Parents in the Study of Mentor Texts*. Paper presented at the Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting (December 2013), Dallas, TX.

Peralta, C., **Leija, M. G.**, & Shearer, C. *Creating Change: A Dual Language Program Flourishing in a Rural Area*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Bilingual Education (February 2008), Tampa Bay, FL.

**Leija, M. G.** *Kuna, Idaho School District: Dual Language Implementation Process*. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Idaho Association of Bilingual Education (October 2007), Twin Falls, ID.

**Granting Activities**

2025 Principal Investigator, *Retaining Pre/Inservice Teachers of Color,* UTSA F&A ILT Faculty Grant Development Award*,* $5,000 (funded).

2024 Principal Investigator, *A Longitudinal Examination of Retention Through Pláticas with Pre/Inservice Teachers of Color,* Spencer Foundation Grant Request, $50,000 (unfunded).

2024 Principal Investigator, *Examining Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Language and Literacy Development,* UTSA F&A ILT Faculty Grant Development Award*,* $5,000 (funded).

2024 Co-Principal Investigator, *Certification and Renewal in Bi/Multilingual Education (CARIBE)*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, PI: Lara, G. P., Co-PIs: **Leija, M. G.,** Lindahl, K., Yazan, B., & Solís, J. $700,000 (unfunded).

2023 Affiliated UTSA Faculty, *Project SELFIES: Secondary English Learners and Families*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, National Professional Development Grant Program (NPD), PI: Lindahl, K., Co-PIs: Yazan, B., & Solís, J., $2,400,000 (funded).

2021 Co-Principal Investigator, *Bilingual Education and Reading Specialization (BEaRS)*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, PI: Lara, G. P., Co-PIs: Ek, L., Smith, H., Solis, J., Henderson, K., & **Leija, M. G.**, $2,302,968 (unfunded).

**Teaching Activities**

**Courses Taught**

Undergraduate Level Courses

ECE 3603 Language and Literacy Acquisition

ECE 3143 Child Growth and Development (online asynchronous)

Graduate Level Courses

ECE 5133 Language and Discourse Development in Young Children

ECE 6213 Current Issues in Early Childhood and Elementary Education

ECE 6473 Seminar in Early Childhood and Elementary Education Research

ECE 6503 Theoretical Foundations of Early Childhood and Elementary

Education

Ph.D. Level Course

ECE 6653/CI 6103 Action Research in Childhood Settings

ILT 7733 Evaluation of Educational Research

**Advising**

2021-present Lead Faculty for ECE 6503 Theoretical Foundations of Early Childhood

and Elementary Education

2020-present Lead Faculty for ECE 3603 Language and Literacy Acquisition

2020-present MAECE Faculty Advisor (10 students)

Fall 2022-present Advised GRA (Laura Cardona, working collaboratively on a manuscript)

Spring 2022 Advised GRA (Bruna Damiana Heinsfeld)

Fall 2021 Advised GRA (Luis Montero Moguel)

Spring 2021 Advised GRA (Melinda Zepeda, working collaboratively on a manuscript)

Spring 2020 Advised GRA (Sydney Naini)

Fall 2019 Advised GRA (James Hernandez)

2019-2020 Undergraduate Student Mentoring, Deborah Martinez, IES-UTSA Educational Pathways Faculty Member

**Advising in Progress**

**Dissertation Co-Supervisor or Committee Member (Ph.D. in progress – 9 students)**

University of Texas at San Antonio Laura Cardona (co-supervisor)

University of Texas at San Antonio Naomi Rubal (committee member)

University of Texas at San Antonio Rashanna Tice (committee member)

University of Texas at San Antonio José Gabriel Bruzón (committee member)

University of Texas at San Antonio Maria Wilhelm (committee member)

University of Texas at San Antonio Samantha Leihsing (committee member)

University of Texas at San Antonio Alexandria Medellin (committee member)

University of Texas at Austin Mónica Pineda (committee member)

University of Texas at Austin Dora N. Diaz (committee member)

**Dissertation Committee Member (Ph.D. conferred – 2 students)**

University of Texas at San Antonio Andrea Leonor Garcia, 2024

University of Texas at Austin Brenda Ayala Lewis, 2022

**Service Activities**

**DePARTMENT of Interedisciplinary Learning and Teaching Service**

**Secretary**

2019-2021 Department Secretary

**Member**

2021-present DAPCC (Department Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee)

2020-2021 Faculty Search Committee Member, Special Education Position

2019-present EC-6 and 4-8 Committee Member

**College of Education and Human Development Service**

**Member**

Spring 2024 Summer Bridging Institute Committee

Spring 2023-present Charles Butt Scholarship Review Committee

2021-2023 COEHD Scholarship Selection Committee

2019-2023 Science of Teaching Reading (STR) Review Committee

2019-2020 Literacy Charette/Platica/Talk Committee

**University Service**

**Member**

Fall 2024-present UTSA Committee on Committees

**National Professional Service**

**Editorial Review Board Member**

2021-present Editorial Board Member, *Language Arts* Journal

**Journal Reviewer**

2024-present Reviewer for *Reading Research Quarterly*

2021-present Reviewer for *Language Arts* Journal

2021-present Reviewer for *The Reading Teacher*

2013-present Reviewer for *Bilingual Research Journal*

**Conference Proposal Reviewer**

2021-present Conference Proposal Reviewer, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Research Strand

2020-2022 Conference Proposal Reviewer, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Rainbow Strand

2024-present Conference Proposal Reviewer, American Educational Research Association (AERA), **Division B - Curriculum Studies/Division B - Section 2: Exploring Past, Present, and Future Curricular Questions**

2020-present Conference Proposal Reviewer, American Educational Research Association (AERA), Critical Perspectives on Early Childhood Education

2019-present Conference Proposal Reviewer, American Educational Research Association (AERA), Research in Reading and Literacy SIG

2017-present Conference Proposal Reviewer, American Educational Research Association (AERA), Bilingual Education Research SIG

2017-2019 Conference Proposal Reviewer, American Educational Research Association (AERA), Hispanic Research Issues SIG & Division G- Section 1: Education and Place, Space, Time

2016-2022 Conference Proposal Reviewer, Literacy Research Association (LRA), Area 7: Social, Cultural, and Political Issues of Literacy Practices in and out of School

2018-2019 Conference Proposal Reviewer, Texas Association for Literacy Education (TALE)

**Member**

2024-present National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Charlotte Huck Award for Outstanding Fiction for Children Committee Chair

2021-2024 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Charlotte Huck Award for Outstanding Fiction for Children Committee Member

2021-2023 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Program Committee

2020-2021 English Language Arts Teacher Educators (ELATE) Nominating Committee, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

2020 Children’s Literature Assembly (CLA) Research Award Committee, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

2020-2021 Early Childhood Education Assembly (ECEA) Program Committee, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

2019-2022 Member Regional Committee, Tomás Rivera Children’s Book Award

2017-2019 Co-director, Holmes Cadets Program

2011-2016 Webmaster, Hispanic Research Issues SIG, American Educational Research Association AERA

**Professional Memberships**

(AERA) American Educational Research Association, Division K – Teacher Education, Division G – Social Context of Education, SIGs: Bilingual Education Research, Research in Reading and Literacy

(NCTE) National Council of Teachers of English

(LRA) Literacy Research Association

(ECEA) Early Childhood Education Assembly

(CLA) Children’s Literature Assembly

(ELATE) English Language Arts Teacher Educators

(NABE) National Association of Bilingual Education

(TABE) Texas Association for Bilingual Education

**Public Service**

**Local Service**

2020-2022 Guest Speaker for Career Day at Monroe May Elementary

**Media Contribution**

2024 Interviewed/quoted in article by Christina Torres Cawdery, “Loving Ourselves and Each Other: NCTE’s PDCRT Program Supports All Students,” *Council Chronicle*. Media topic: Professional Dyads and Culturally Relevant Teaching (ODCRT) Program. September 2024.

2022 Interviewed/quoted in article by Gail Cornwall, “Eight Best Practices for

Teaching in Dual Language and Other Bilingual Programs,” *School Library Journal*. Media topic: dual-language and bilingual education programs. March 24, 2022.

**Consulting**

2019 Educational Consultant, Eanes ISD, Austin, TX