When I came to this country from Puerto Rico with my mom and baby sister it was a very difficult time for us, it was hard because coming from another country we did not speak English. When my mom moved us from Puerto Rico to New York we did not speak one single word of English because our first language is Spanish it what we spoke, wrote, and read. At the time we moved to the Bronx we did not have all the advances that we have now in interpretation services that are available today. Today we have interpretation services in many different languages so anyone can come from another country and go to any hospital or government building and they will find an interpreter to help you. It was during this difficult times that I discover how important literacy is to learning a new language it was through reading that I learned to speak English.

One of the first things my mom did for us when we first came to New York was number one register me in school why is this important you may think I was already attending school but you see in Puerto Rico I was not allow to go to school because I was considered handicapped and there my mother could not put me in school when she tried they told her that due to the fact that I was very sick and a little person I could not attend school with the normal children and that they could not make the proper accommodations for a child with conditions. When we arrived in New York the first thing my mom did was get me the good doctors and find a school for me to start attending school right away. I fell very ill and was admitted to Montefiore Hospital for an extended period of time while I was in the hospital I had a teacher who would teach the children in the hospital she would bring books for us to read and all the books where written in English it

was there that I first started reading English. The other thing my mom did for us was make sure that we got library cards to be able to take out books to practice our English. My mom had always believed in the importance of reading even though I was not going to school in Puerto Our Father from the Bible she had me memorize it by hard. It is weird how to this day I cannot read the bible in English it is just weird for me it is like it loses something significance for me. My mom always made sure that even though I was not permitted to attend school like the other children that I had books to read and that I learned to write.

It was a very scary situation to be in when someone is speaking to you and you don’t understand one word of what is being said to you or when my mom was signing medicals forms to have all sorts of procedures perform on my two-year-old sister and I without her comprehending what the procedures were for. My mom thought she was doing the correct thing to get my sister and I needed but at the same time it was very risky because certain procedures were dangerous. As an eight-year-old little girl I took it upon to learn English to help me mother understand what they were doing and help her make the best decisions regarding our health needs. It was quite amazing how fast I able to understand what I was reading and begin to be able to understand what was being said to me I was also able to translate to my mom what the doctors were saying to my mom I picked up the English language so quickly and so well that my doctor would have me help him translate for other Spanish speaking families in the hospital.

It was very funny to see this tiny little girl following a doctor around the hospital to tell the other adult what the doctor was saying people would look at the doctor like he was crazy but once I started to explain what the doctor was saying to them they became quite impress.

I learned at a very young age that things for me where not going to be different so I learned to work even harder to do things because people always saw me and assumed that certain were not doable for me or that it would be too hard for me to do. When it came to learning English I work extra hard I read every book I could get my hands on my cousins would help me with the pronunciation of the word and the different sounds. The teacher that would visit the hospital to give lessons was one of the people who helped me appreciate and acquire my love for books and literacy I am a big believer that when you teach children to love reading and learn to appreciate books and all the things we can learn from reading all the different things we can learn from just opening up a book. One of the things I learned was a whole new language but also that knowing two languages would make it possible to help other people to be able to communicate with their children’s doctor to be able to help them understand each other.

In this present day I try to instill this love of reading to my own children when I got pregnant with my son the first thing I did when I found out I was pregnant was join baby’s first book club I would read to my son as a tiny baby and I continued this when I got pregnant with my daughter I take my children to the library as often as possible. Both of my children have learning disabilities but when it comes to writing and reading they have always managed to do very well my daughter has been able to exceed everyone expectation when it comes to reading she is in an integrated classroom and she has been able to pass the children from the regular education students in her class. I believe that when you saw children to love and appreciate literacy you open up a whole world of opportunities for them. My mother believed that teaching me to read would help me to achieve anything that got the opportunities I did not get and she was right when I finally got to first grade I was not behind the children who had been going to school way before me if anything the teachers told my mom that when it came to reading and writing I was slightly ahead of most of the children in class. I will always be grateful to my mom for taking the time to teach me to read and to love books to this day my favorite place to be in the world is a library as a student I worked in my middle school library cataloging books and checking out books I remember how excited I got when we got books of new books or when we had the book fairs my mom would give us money to order books, by the time I was getting ready to go to high school I was reading at a 12th grade level. I graduated to honors English as a freshman in high school. I pray and hope that my children will continue their love of reading and if they someday have children of their own they can teach their children to appreciate literacy and understand how important it is.