Dialogue journals are written chats between a child and an adult. The child and adult take turns writing in the journal about experiences daily. The adult does not correct the child’s grammar, punctuation, or spelling, but demonstrates these skills by using correct English when responding (Bailes, 1999; Bailes, Sears, Slobodzian, & Staton, 1986).

Dialogue journals are important for students in school. They are also critical for children and parents at home. The Spring 2000 issue of Odyssey showed how parents and children who spoke Spanish and Mandarin used dialogue journals to help the children develop their home language (Schleper, 2000). All parents and caregivers, whether writing English or other languages, can help their children develop languages through daily use of dialogue journals.

Dialogue journals can also be used by students and dorm staff to develop students’ writing skills and discuss issues important to adolescents. For example, at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, they are used by students and dorm staff at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf. Here is part of a dialogue as it developed in a journal:

**December 12**
Hello anybody!
What am I doing with writing this about? (ha)
There’s only 7 more days that I’m going to home in Virginia. Yahoo! What do I want for Christmas? Hmm... Lots of clothes and want new car but it isn’t car until next summer. So what do you want for Christmas? Hmm...
–Toni

**December 15**
I just woke up and had a nice little surprise: a little bag with cookies and kisses. What about you? Well, there’s just five more days to go. I can’t wait!!! I want tons of clothes, books, and money. Oh, also my family!!! Have a merry Christmas.
–Carla

The dialogue journal helps all of the students practice writing. At the same time, it gives them an opportunity to discuss important concepts for teenagers.

Toni, Cathy, and Carla were anxious about going home for the holidays but also excited to see their families. The journal allowed them to express their feelings and practice their writing.

With children in the homes with parents and caregivers, or with students and dorm staff, dialogue journals help children of all ages develop writing as well as share or address personal issues. I encourage adults to use journals with children daily.

***References***
