

**Huynh Dinh Te**

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL**

**A Sourcebook for  
Language Minority Parents  
& School Personnel**

**Southeast Asia Community Resource Center  
Folsom Cordova Unified School District  
Rancho Cordova, California**

**1994**

**Parent Involvement in School:  
A Handbook for Language Minority Parents and School  
Personnel (Vietnamese)**

**by Huynh Dinh Te, Ph.D.**

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## Foreword

Most language minority parents are deeply concerned with the education of their children, but many of them are not familiar with the American educational system and instructional programs. Parents often wonder how they can become more knowledgeable about school programs to help their children at home. On the other hand, many school personnel are frustrated when they try to involve language minority parents in school. There has been a strong need for materials that provide language minority parents with basic information on how to help their children at home and prepare them for school success, and at the same time, provide school personnel with information that helps successfully involve parents in the education partnership. Dr. Huynh Dinh Te's *Parent Involvement in School: A Handbook for Language Minority Parents and School Personnel* is an attempt to meet that need. I hope that this handbook will foster the spirit of partnership between the home and the school, one of the basic tenets of California's educational policy.

While we at the Department of Education encourage materials that promote cooperation and partnership between the home and the school in the education of children, this encouragement does not, in any way, mean that it is an endorsement of this handbook. The content of this book is the sole responsibility of the author, to whom we wish to express our deep appreciation. His endeavor represents a worthwhile first effort to bridge the gap between school and language minority home.

Van LE, Consultant  
EIEP State Coordinator  
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July, 1994

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**PART ONE**

**A Sourcebook for  
Language Minority Parents**





## Introduction

Parental involvement in school as a means to improve education has recently attracted much attention from researchers, educators, and policy-makers. It has become one of the basic components in many blueprints for educational reform such as *America 2000: An Education Strategy* (U.S. Department of Education, 1991) or *The Parent Involvement Initiative* (California Department of Education, 1988). Language minority parents often wonder how they can effectively be involved in the education of their children if they do not have English proficiency, a high level of education, and experience in the American educational system. On the other hand, school personnel often complain of language minority parents' "lack of concern" for their children's education, based on the fact that they rarely attend school meetings and activities. The purpose of this book is to suggest ways in which language minority parents—even those who are not highly proficient in English or highly educated—can get involved in their children's education, both in the home and in school; how school personnel can better understand the concerns and problems of language minority parents; and how they can help these parents get involved in school. Parental involvement links the school, the home, and the community. The rapport of trust and collaboration between the school and the home will greatly benefit language minority students in their school work and their adjustment to American society.

## **Role of the Home & School in Education**

Many parents still assume that the education of their children is the sole responsibility of the school. This is particularly true of language minority parents. They often believe that parents provide children with shelter, food, clothing, and love, and the school provides for their educational needs. They seldom realize that *parents play a very important role in the achievement of children in school*. Children will be in a better position to succeed in school if they come to school well-prepared for school work. This preparation comes from parents. Parents may help or hinder the teachers in accomplishing their educational task.

There are good reasons for parents to be involved in school. First, it is of benefit to the parents themselves. They will get a realistic view of classroom situations, of the child's behavior in school, a better understanding of the school system, and the child's educational programs. The teachers and school can also benefit from parental involvement. They will better understand parents and their concerns and the behavior of children with different cultural backgrounds. In this way, strong rapport of trust and collaboration between the home and the school can be established. The child will also benefit from parental involvement for, with their first-hand experience in school, parents can better help their child at home and help plan further educational and career objectives. On the other hand, the school will have the opportunity to consult parents about decisions affecting their children and be able to provide a curriculum which is more

responsive to the child's needs. The importance of parental involvement in the child's education and school activities has been recognized by teachers, administrators, and policy-makers. Marilyn Russell Bittle, President of California Teachers Association, believes that

parents are teachers, too... . They should become a partner with their schools in the teaching of their child. They can work along with the teacher to spark the curiosity, energy, and enthusiasm for learning (*Fifty Ways to Help Your Children Learn* 1988: i).

The belief in the importance of parental involvement is supported by research evidence. Ann Henderson (1987: 8), for instance, stated that

involving parents in their children's formal education improves student achievement. It has been found that children whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with the school score higher (higher grades, higher test scores, more positive attitude and behavior) than children of similar aptitudes and family background whose parents are not involved. The school and the home must interconnect with each other, with the community, and the world at large for the improvement of education.

Children are learning all the time, even outside school. They spend 91 percent of their lives from birth through the age 18 in places other than the school (Coleman, 1991). For a substantial part of that time, parents are their teachers. What they learn at school needs reinforcing and rewarding at home. A joint effort by parents and teachers is essential to deal more successfully with problems of discipline, motivation, and the development of good work habits at home and in school. According to Coleman (1966), parent involvement provides the "human and social capital"

needed for the success of children in school. By *human capital* Coleman means the knowledge and skills that a person has, and by *social capital*, the relation between persons in the family and community. This relationship is a resource upon which the child can draw when there are difficulties and for parents to aid them in the shaping of the habits of their children.

Many mainstream parents have not been actively involved in school. Many parents believe that real learning is done in school only. Others, because of the demands of the workplace, do not have time to address the concerns and problems of their children's education. Today,

single-parent families abound, mothers working outside the home are the norm rather than the exception, and parents everywhere confront perplexing choices about how to use their time and energy (Coleman, 1991: iii).

School districts often complain about language minority parents' "lack of concern" about their children's education and apathy toward school involvement. In the following pages we shall consider the ways in which language minority parents can help their children at home and prepare them for better work at school, and will suggest some strategies for involving parents in school.

# **Parents' Involvement in Children's Education at Home**

## **Environment Conducive to Learning**

In order for the children to study well at school, at home parents must provide them with an environment which is conducive to study. This environment can be provided by parents of any social status, any racial and ethnic background, and any level of education.

### **Physical environment**

Children need a place which is quiet, warm, well-lighted, and well-furnished with instructional equipment and materials, such as paper, pencils, rulers, dictionaries and books. It is obvious that noise and movement distract children's attention and prevent them from concentrating. Therefore, the study area for children should be free of music, conversation, TV and video viewing by other members of the family. No real learning can take place in front of a television set.

### **Psychological and moral environment**

Also important for the child's learning climate is a positive psychological and moral environment in which the child is free from anxiety, worries, and frustration. A positive atmosphere in the home is recognized by parents' attitudes and aspirations for their children. If the parents have a strong belief in hard work and discipline, if they give encouragement and motivation, the children will do well in school. A negative home atmosphere will

hamper the work of even the most brilliant and hard-working child.

A child's success in school is due less to superior talent than to hard work and encouragement from families and teachers. High achievers tend to be involved in a number of enrichment activities at home. In contrast, the family activities of under-achievers focus on passivity and leisure.

## **Motivation and Self-Esteem**

In discussing the process of acquisition of knowledge and skills, authors often focus almost exclusively on cognitive and psychomotor domains. Affective factors, however, are also very important for they affect your child's sustained attention and interest in learning.

### **Motivation**

Motivation is very important to the learning process. If children are not motivated, they will not learn, despite the best efforts of the teachers. Children must see and feel the need for learning. Unless they see a need for and have an interest in learning, there is little incentive for them to learn. You can help motivate your children. You must indicate that you believe education is important and that you want your children to do the best they possibly can at school. There are two kinds of motivation:

*Intrinsic motivation.* This is the need, desire, interest, and love for doing things that are rewarding. Think of the intrinsic motivation that children have when they first learn to walk, to talk, to explore things in their immediate environment. You should look for things that capture your children's

interest and fan the inner fire in them.

*Extrinsic motivation.* This is the need or desire to do something for external reasons, such as stars, points, candies, or prospects for a better future. Attention from and feedback from you provides extrinsic motivation.

Parental behavior may prompt motivation or dampen it. Following is what parents can do to ***motivate*** their children:

- *Demonstrate your value for learning.* Plan family activities that are both educational and fun, such as trips to a museum or nature walks. Let your child know how much you value education and the importance of education.
- *Show interest* in your child's education. Set aside a few minutes a day to discuss with your child alone things of interest. Know what interests your child.
- *Sincere expectancy.* Make your children know that you want their best efforts in school. However, refrain from applying undue pressure to achieve.
- *Acknowledge efforts.* Recognize your child for a job well done, for the effort displayed when the attempt is not successful. Help your children see the results of their efforts.

On the other hand, certain parental behavior may ***stifle*** motivation. These are some behaviors that may exert negative effects on children's motivation:

- *Not valuing* what your children pursue. Such statements as, "You waste your time on that novel!" have a negative effect on motivation to read.
- *Interrupting your children's interest.* Avoid asking them to do something else when they are pursuing a learning activity:



"Put that book down and water the garden," and so on.

## Self-esteem

Children will learn better if they have good self-esteem. When their basic needs are met, children will feel good about themselves; they will have a high degree of self-esteem. Success in school is strongly related to self-esteem. A student with a high IQ (talent or ability to learn) but low self-esteem may do poorly; but a student with average intelligence and high self-esteem may excel. High self-esteem doesn't just pay off in school. Critical decisions such as whether to use drugs, to drop out of school, and other personal and career decisions are affected by children's sense of self-worth. Children with low self-esteem are usually afraid to risk failure or to accept challenges, and often become underachievers. Helping your children develop high self-esteem is one of the most important things you can do for them.

You can help your children build self-esteem when you:

- *Show love and respect.* Talk to your child about activities and interests and devote time to parent activities at school, such as going to their games, concerts, parents' day at school and award ceremonies. Children who feel that they are loved, respected and taken seriously, and who feel that they are responsible for and able to influence their own lives generally have high self-esteem.
- *Listen to your child.* Children will learn that listening is important, and they will learn to listen to other people, including you. Hearing what other people have to say helps a child to cooperate, to negotiate, and to compromise, all of which are important to developing self-esteem.

- *Attend to the good things* your child does, not just the bad. Reward a job well done with recognition, praise, and privileges.
- Work on building your child's feeling of self-worth along with *self-discipline*.
- Take your child's feelings, ideas, and emotions *seriously*.
- *Give responsibility* so that children feel useful and valued.
- *Use language that builds self-esteem* such as, "What an excellent idea!" "It's very thoughtful of you," and so on.
- *Set a good example*. You are role models for your children. Show to your child that you feel good about yourself.

Parents' attitudes and behavior can also *destroy children's self-esteem*. Negative statements, hurtful comments and sarcasm such as, "Why are you so stupid?" "You are absolutely worthless!" undermine children's confidence in themselves.

## **Scheduling and Monitoring**

### **Household routines and expectations**

You should work with your children on a work schedule and a set of rules to enforce it. The schedule should be consistent and include time for study, relaxation, recreation, and sleep. It should be noted that a child can learn a great deal from play as well as from study. It is important for you to help your child achieve the proper balance between study, homework, and television. Sandy Dornbusch (1987) believes that more television viewing is associated with lower grades. On the other hand, Stephen Krashen (1984) believes that reading well comes from reading a lot, especially self-chosen material.

The rules should include the hours when the TV must be

If your child complains about problems at school, ask for more information from your child and make appointments to meet with the teacher or counselor for help. Children should know the limits on their behavior and the positive or negative consequences of their actions. Not setting limits leads to confusion, unwillingness to accept responsibility, and a lack of self-control. This kind of behavior is often carried over into the classroom. Many authors believe that lack of parents' monitoring is a major cause of child behavior problems. By setting limits for your children, you teach them to become *self-disciplined*.

Parents should focus on the consequences of behavior and actions that do not conform to the rules of the home and the rules in school and society. These things are not stressed enough at school. Children should be given the freedom of choice appropriate to their ability to choose, but they should be guided in their choices. Along with freedom of choice, your children must experience the consequences of their choices. Let your child know exactly what is expected of them and what the consequences will be if expectations are not met. Avoid the extremes of being too permissive or overly authoritarian. Parents who are strong but open to discussion and negotiation respond to good behavior with praise, bad behavior with restrictions, and offer of help and encouragement.

Parents should make it their responsibility to teach their children the basic rules of behavior rather than leave this task to teachers. Lack of discipline is one of the most important problems facing schools. Parents should also support school rules and goals and avoid doing things that undermine them. When the family reinforces what is stressed at school, students are more likely to see the school and the home as related. Parenting styles may affect the child's performance at school. Sandy Dornbusch (1987)

believes that children with very permissive parents don't do well at school. Students with extremely authoritarian parents do even worse. Inconsistent parenting is even more strongly associated with lower grades than is either authoritarian or permissive parenting. *Authoritative* parenting, on the other hand, is linked with good grades. Authoritative parents are clear in their expectations and limits, are strong and consistent in applying consequences, and alter the rules to fit the maturity of the child. The relation of the three parenting styles to grades is the same for both male and female students and more or less applies to all ethnic groups, family structures, and levels of parents' education.

In Asia, behavior is closely monitored not only by families and schools but also by neighborhoods. There are always some adults in the home to supervise the children. In the United States, the traditional Asian family structure has changed. Single parent families are not uncommon and in two-parent families, both parents often work outside the home. Often there is no adult available to supervise the children. Asian schools and laws usually tolerate, accept, and in some cases, even encourage corporal punishment for children's misbehavior. Corporal punishment has been abolished in twenty-one states (including California) and the District of Columbia, and many school districts in all parts of the country have outlawed the use of corporal punishment in local public schools.

The child abuse law provides that if parents use corporal punishment and this causes injury, they will be punished by law and the child may be taken away from the parents. Punishment that does not injure the child is acceptable. The child abuse law has serious implications for Asian parents who practice folk medicine to treat common cold and flu symptoms. This practice is commonly known as "metal scratching" or "wind scratching".

When a child catches a cold, Asian parents use a coin to rub vigorously on the child's back and forehead with medicated oil, "to get rid of the bad fluid and bad wind." This practice leaves marks on the child's body which look like bruises from physical abuse. Many Asian parents have run into trouble with the law because of this practice, in that school authorities think that the children have been abused and report the incidents to police. School staff are required by law to report any suspected or alleged child abuse or neglect. Failure to do so may result in a staff person being punished by law and losing the credential to teach. To avoid any trouble with the law, you should refrain from practicing this kind of folk medicine, or should tell children to tell the teacher that the marks are the result of medical treatment.

## **Establishing Good Study Habits**

Help your child establish good organizational habits. Disorganized persons waste a lot of time finding their things. The better organized the students, the less work they have to do to achieve excellence. Make sure that your child has in a school pack the necessary tools, such as a notebook, a pencil case with pens that write and pencils that are sharpened. Labeled folders will help keep assignments organized. A daily assignment calendar helps keep track of assignments.

Help your child acquire good study skills and strategies which can be applied to the study of any subject matter. Your child should know how to gather information and ideas, and how to record, analyze, and synthesize information. They should know to review, summarize, and use mnemonic devices to help remember facts and figures. When studying written material, they should know how to underline the key words, and then outline the main

ideas and the main parts of a passage. The section headings help organize the ideas in a chapter. The important words are usually darker or printed in italic type. Ask your children questions about assignments and encourage them to ask their teachers for clarification.

Encourage your children to visit the school library frequently and establish good library habits, such as returning books on time. Suggest that they look up a topic in the library catalog, periodical guides, and reference books. The librarian will help them get started. Encourage your children to ask the librarian for help in locating needed materials. Most libraries have information and referral services, so even if they can't give you the help you need, they will point you in the right direction.

## **Helping Your Child at Home**

### **Preparing for school**

The American school system assumes that parents will take responsibility for preparing their children for school and later reinforcing what is taught in the classroom. Language minority parents should provide their children with necessary motor, cognitive, social, and emotional developmental experiences that help ensure success in school. If the children enter school without readiness skills, they will be "at risk" for school failure. In order to prepare their children for the American public school, parents must do certain things in the preschool years to help their children acquire the skills that are expected from kindergartners. You should talk to and read to your children and encourage the development of their curiosity which lays the foundation for academic skills. Talking about interesting topics, in the home language or in English, develops a strong vocabulary,

which is important to school success.

Language minority parents—Hispanic and Asian in particular—should realize that out-of-school educational activities, such as trips to parks, zoos, museums, and libraries, provide a base of experience for understanding and reinforcing what the children learn in class. School-aged children should spend up to twenty hours a week engaged in constructive learning activities outside the classroom, such as reading for fun, writing, pursuing hobbies, watching educational programs, talking to adults about the day's events, or participating in sports.

### **Helping with homework**

Homework supplements and reinforces the work done in class. It develops students' initiative and responsibility. You should help your children with homework habits by starting when they are still young. You do not have to do the assignments with your children, but you should create a time and place for doing homework. The amount of time spent on homework varies according to the child's age, abilities, and the teacher's requirements. According to the National Parent Teachers Association, students from kindergarten to the third grade generally have little homework, no more than twenty minutes per day, while students from the fourth to sixth grade usually have from twenty to forty minutes per day, and high school students usually spend about two hours each night for homework (Cutright, 1989: 105). You should ask your children's teachers about their homework policies and specific assignments. You should provide resources at home for reading and learning academics. Books and magazines should be available. You should show your children that you believe reading is both enjoyable and useful. You should set a good example by reading yourself and reading with or to their children.

Many parents can check to see if the children understand homework assignments. If your children have trouble, work out examples with them, give clarification, show the procedure, then encourage them to complete the work themselves. Do not do your children's homework for them. Encourage students, especially those who live in the same neighborhood or household, to form study groups of two or three, working together on home work. According to Dornbusch (1987), studying with friends is associated with higher grades, while hanging out, partying, and talking on the phone are associated with lower grades.

If you cannot give direct help, consider getting a tutor, who may be an older sibling, older relative, or a college student. The following activities are examples of how to help children:

### *Language arts*

#### *Reading*

This is a critical area of learning. It is required in all classwork. Read to your child if he or she cannot read yet. If he can, then encourage him to read to you. Make a pleasant experience of the event. Let your child choose a favorite story then explain pictures and answer questions about it. Encourage your child to read by praising and rewarding his reading efforts. Discuss what the class is reading in school. Encourage your child to use dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, thesauruses, and atlases. Set a good example by reading yourself. Your enjoyment of reading shows that it is a rewarding and worthwhile activity. Also introduce your child to the public library at an early age.

#### *Writing*

Writing is important for communication in American soci-



ety and work. Let your child see that you write. Encourage your children to write letters to relatives and friends instead of using the telephone, to keep a diary of important events, and to read completed writing assignments aloud to the family. Your child should be supplied with writing materials, stationery, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. Writing is the most advanced language skill, particularly for second language learners. Reading often helps the brain recognize the correct patterns and results in better writing.

If the school does not teach literacy in your home language, find a way to provide literacy instruction outside of school. Many communities use churches, schools, or community centers for class, and volunteer teachers are found within the community. Once basic literacy is learned, provide reading materials (newspapers, magazines, dictionaries, novels, and so on) in your home language.

### *Listening and speaking*

Begin talking to your children from infancy. Make sounds, call attention to sounds and connect them with objects and events to associate speech with meaning. Take time to listen and to speak with your children every day. (This is important in large families, where the youngest children often communicate more with siblings than parents.) Answer questions patiently and as promptly as possible. Play games with your children that require careful listening. Listen to your child carefully. Stress the importance of proper speech and pronunciation, but do not create anxiety about accent.

It is important to learn English but it is equally important not to neglect your primary language. Be confident that your children will naturally acquire full fluency in English; pay

attention to developing fluency and literacy in your home language.

### ***Mathematics***

You can use grocery trips to teach math to your child. Point out costs and weights of items. Let your child pay the cashier and count the change. Play games requiring math skills, such as sorting, comparing, sequencing, and estimating. Discuss measurement and time concepts with your child. The United States still uses the English measurement system (inches, feet, miles, pounds, gallons, and so on), while most newcomers use the metric system.

### ***Science***

Help your child learn about animals and plants by visiting zoos, parks, botanical gardens, and aquariums. Discuss nutrition and health, life cycle, and the human body and its various functions. Allow your child to operate equipment such as calculators, cameras, stereos, computers, and science kits. Outdoor experience such as camping and hiking is helpful for your child to understand science. Encouraging children to wonder “why” things happen is good motivation for using science to find out the answers. In some homes, the scientific answer will conflict with the answer provided by your belief (religious) system.

### ***Social studies***

Discuss with your children current events in the media, and consider the impact that these may have on your community and family. Take your child to visit historical sites and museums. Attend fairs, exhibits, or celebrations to gain

awareness of cultural differences. Play games to develop skills in geography. Have a current world and state map in the house, and let children help find the way to destinations on street maps.

Diversity in your children's classrooms can be disturbing, especially to newcomers from homogeneous societies. Your children listen to what you say about other people, and will carry your hatreds and prejudices to school, where taunting, arguing, and fighting then occur. The teachers expect your children to work cooperatively in groups with the children of the enemy you have fought or the oppressor you have fled or of a religion you cannot tolerate. Encourage your children to get to know other children one-to-one, to leave homeland divisions at home, and to get along peacefully. This is important in America, where people from so many countries and cultures live and work side by side.

Teachers and parents have different roles and their activities with children should be different. There are many publications by school districts, county offices of education or state departments of education showing parents how to help their children. Some of these publications have been translated into other languages to help language minority parents. Here are a few of them:

- *Fifty Ways to Help Your Children Learn at Home*. California Teachers Association and National Education Association. Translation into Spanish, Chinese, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, and Korean. Santa Clara County Office of Education, 100 Skyport Drive, San Jose CA 95115.
- *How to Help Your Child Succeed in School*. Columbus Gas

Educational Services. P.O. Box 117, Columbus OH 43216-0117 (video and brochure).

- *Books for Children*. Consumer Information Center, Department 116, Pueblo CO 81009.
- *Becoming A Nation Of Readers: What Parents Can Do*. Consumer Information Center, Department 116, Pueblo CO 91009.
- *Family Math*. Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley CA 94702.
- *The Family Math Film*. 16mm film or video showing the kinds of activities that parents and children can do together. Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley CA 94702.
- *Parenting Curriculum for Language Minority Parents*. Sacramento-Stockton Family English Literacy Project. Translation into Vietnamese, Chinese, Lao, Hmong, Spanish, and Korean.

## Preparing for college

If you want your child to attend college, start preparing well before the senior year of high school. Beginning in ninth grade, classes and grades become part of the transcript which is used by colleges in consideration of students. With the advice of the counselor in your child's school, help your child choose the right high school coursework for college preparation.

There are several ways to get a college education. In general, the more years of college, the higher the salary. Some of the post-secondary school choices are described below.

*Community colleges* admit students with a high school diploma or equivalent, or students over the age of eighteen.

The study usually lasts for two years and results in achievement of the Associate in Arts degree (AA). After graduation, students may transfer to a four-year college, or may enter the workforce with technical skills. Students should decide on the four-year college and consult with their college advisor for course work required for transfer.

*Four-year colleges and universities.* Different colleges and universities have different requirements, but they all require a moderate to high grade point average (GPA) and many require that applicants take a college aptitude test. The university's undergraduate application packet, available from any campus, will give detailed information on admission requirements. The high school counselor can help your child choose the right courses and select a college where he will be most successful. You also have to make financial arrangements for your child's college study. Private universities are very expensive. The high school counselor or the financial aid office of the university your child is interested in entering can help you explore financial aid for your child's study. There are several types of aid, including grants, scholarships, loans, and part-time work. To apply for federal or state assistance, request the form "Student Aid Application for California" from the university or from the California Student Aid Commission, 1401 Fifth Street, Sacramento CA 95814.

## Communication with Your Child

Set aside a time each day to communicate with your child about what happened that day at school. Be available to listen to your child's concerns and opinions about teachers, courses, and policies. Show enthusiasm for your child's interests, listen to and be responsive. Be ready to extend help. Share your feelings without lecturing; use "I" statements more often than "you" statements. Communicate with your child about each problem that develops, then contact the appropriate school staff person to help you resolve it. Open communication should be maintained between parents and children. In the United States, parents have little time or opportunity to be in contact with their children. In Asia, meal time and after meal time are the times for the whole family to gather together. It is important to remember that negative comments, such as sarcasm, "put-down" remarks, or empty threats can bring about a breakdown of communication. If children cannot communicate with you, they will look for somebody else with whom to share their feelings, probably a peer. Antisocial behavior is often linked to a communication breakdown between parents and children. Communicating and demonstrating your values is the key to developing them in your child.

One of the strongest ways to communicate values is by setting examples.

- *Act the way you want your child to act.* Consider what values you want to teach and show that you live by them daily.
- *Practice what you preach.* By your example you can help your child develop good manners, appropriate language, awareness of dress and appearance, self-respect, and self-esteem.

Communication skills are influenced by the examples

children see and hear. Parents who listen to their children with interest, attention, and patience set a good example. Listen to nonverbal messages communicated by the tone of voice or the facial expressions and avoid cutting children off before they have finished speaking.

### ***Resource Materials***

- Baron, Bruce. et al. *What Did You Learn in School Today?* New York: Warner Books, 1983.
- Cutright, Melitta J. *The National PTA Talks to Parents: How to Get the Best Education for Your Child.* Doubleday, 1989.
- *Information for Parents* Complete set of 12 brochures. Washington DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- Perrone, Vitto. *101 Educational Conversations with Your Kindergartner/1st Grader.* Chelsea House, 1993.
- Rich, Dorothy. *MegaSkills: How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and Beyond.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1988.

## **Getting Involved in School**

### **New School, New System, New Role for Parents**

The American system of education differs from that of your country of origin in many respects. In most countries in the world, especially in Asia, education is very centralized. The Ministry of Education of the central government controls the education of the whole country. Everything derives from the Ministry of Education; the local school simply carries out the policy, curriculum, and regulations established by the Ministry of Education. This ministry is in charge of teacher preparation, licensing, recruitment, assignment, and dismissal for all the schools in the nation. There is one uniform curriculum and one set of textbooks for all schools.

The American educational system is quite different. Parents should understand the structure of public schools to help their children make appropriate decisions concerning their educational. The U.S. constitution does not vest the power of controlling education in the central (federal) government. The states have reserved powers to regulate civil matters, police, and education. Therefore, the U.S. Department of Education does not have direct control of the local school or school district. The school which your children attend, like the other schools in the school district, is directly controlled by the school board, elected by the local citizens, including you and other parents. This board is also called Board of Trustees or Board of Education. The power of education



belongs to the state, but the state delegates the administration of the schools to the school board for day-to-day operations and policy-making. The state is concerned with general educational policies for the whole state. The local school board is responsible for designing curriculum, selecting instructional materials, hiring administrators, teachers and other staff. Unlike teachers in Asian countries, teachers in the U.S. are not hired and assigned by the U.S. Department or the State Departments of Education. They cannot be transferred from one school district to another. The state retains the power to determine the conditions of teacher preparation and licensing. Because the control of the local schools is in the hands of the school board, elected by the local people, education is, in fact, controlled by local people, including parents. Therefore, in the United States, parents must be more involved in local education matters than in other countries.

In this country, you have the right and obligation to be involved in your child's education and contribute to the betterment of the local school for the benefits of your own children. If language minority parents are not involved in school matters, the administrators and teachers may think that they are "not concerned" with their children's education. Within this new context, language minority parents should assume more responsibility. In the following pages we shall suggest a few practical things that you could do to get more involved in school.

## **Getting to Know Your Child's School**

Except for year-round schools, the usual school year in the is from September to June. Children are enrolled on the first days of September. After a child reaches the age of six, he or she must be enrolled in the first grade. (In most states, kindergarten and

preschool are optional, but very important to school success.) Immigrant children of school age should be enrolled in school as soon as they arrive in the United States. Grade level is determined primarily on the basis of age and previous school experience. Public schools are free and students can borrow books at no charge. You are expected to pay for your child's lunch but you may apply for free or reduced priced meals for their children.

## **Enrollment**

To register a child, it is necessary for parents to present documents to verify: a) birth date; b) address, and c) completed immunizations (polio, DPT, measles, mumps, rubella, and TB test). Immunizations must be up-to-date. You have to fill a registration form, an emergency card, and a home language survey. Students are assigned to schools according to the home address of the parent or legal guardian. These assignments are made according to the capacity of the school and federal regulations which require all public schools to be racially integrated. If you wish to have your child attend a school other than that based on the home address, you must submit an Optional Enrollment Request (OER). These requests are granted when there is space in the requested school and no adverse impact on the racial balance of the school.

## **School structure**

The American school structure may be different from the school structure of your country of origin. Elementary education may consist of five, six, or eight years of schooling, but the total school years required for elementary and secondary education is twelve, from the first grade to the twelfth grade. If elementary

education consists of eight years, then high school education consists of four years, from grade 9 to grade 12. If elementary school consists of six years, then there is the middle school, consisting of grades 7 and 8. There are some variation in the middle school and high school structure, depending on the local school district. Kindergarten part of in elementary school, but preschool generally is not.

The basic subjects taught in elementary grades are language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and physical education. Other subjects include music and arts. Some schools also have bilingual education programs. Classes offered in middle school and high school include English, math, history, biology, foreign language, physical education, art, home economics, and vocational education. You should check with your local school for details on courses offered.

### **Information on school and programs**

After your child is enrolled, you should get to know your child's school well. Collect and carefully read information materials on school policies, rules and regulations, programs available, graduation requirements. Many schools have a handbook that contains this kind of information. Ask the school secretary if the school has one. State law requires that students in California public schools be tested at least once in grades four through six and once in grades ten and eleven in reading comprehension, writing, and computation. To obtain a high school diploma, your child has to complete the required courses of study and successfully pass the district's proficiency tests. Each school district establishes standards of proficiency for its high school graduates. These standards should cover at least the areas of reading, writing and mathematics. Each district also develops a test to

assess a student's attainment of those standards. Therefore, you should check with your school district for details.

In American schools, all children are expected to attend and master basic skills. Because some students face obstacles to learning, there are different kinds of special services. Your child may need special assistance and qualify for those programs. You have to ask details on those programs from the school district. A few of these programs are:

- *Bilingual Education.* This program is designed for students of limited English proficiency (LEP), to help them learn English and the subject matter through their primary language. There are several types of bilingual programs available, both for elementary and high school students. It should be noted that *not all* school districts provide these programs, and districts may offer bilingual education in only one or two languages. The best source of information is your school and school district.
- *Special Education.* Children with disabilities are provided with special services while they attend school. They qualify for special education if they have hearing, vision, speech, physical or health impairment, learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, mental retardation, or other disabilities.
- *Compensatory Education.* Not all schools offer this program, which is called *Chapter 1* if federally funded or *SCE* (State Compensatory Education) if state funded. This program is designed for students who score below the average in reading or mathematics, and who attend schools in certain low-income neighborhoods. Under current law, LEP students

are eligible for extra help if they have an "educational disadvantage" in their own language. This means that children who did not attend school in the country of origin can qualify for services to compensate for their disadvantage.

Other services such as social work, rehabilitative counseling, school health services, and so on, are made available at no cost to the parents. The handbook of your child's school contains information on those programs. Consult also with *A Handbook of California Education for Language Minority Parents* (Sacramento: California Department of Education). Translations into Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Lao, Hmong, and some other languages are also available.

### **Meeting school personnel**

The first person that you meet at your child's school is no doubt the *school secretary*. She is a good source of information about the school. Ask permission to see the *principal* and introduce yourself. The principal is the person to answer your questions about the school and its programs. You may get permission to visit your child's *teacher(s)* and *classes*. You should know your child's teacher early in the school year, before conferences are scheduled or problems develop. If your child has several teachers, get to know all of them if possible. Let the teachers know that you are interested in your child's school progress and you expect your child to do well in school. Make the first meeting a friendly, positive one. Also stay in touch with the *counselors* (in junior high and senior high schools) and make sure your child stays in touch with the counselors as well. Counselors keep track of a student's academic progress in school and help the child decide what classes to take during high school and how to prepare for college or a

career. They also provide information on scholarships. Counselors are, in addition, a link between the parent and the teachers. If you do not speak fluent English, ask help from people who do. There may be teachers or paraprofessionals in the school who are bilingual.

EMERGENCY CARD			
Student's name _____			
_____	_____	_____	
Last	First	Middle Initial	
Address _____			Apt # _____
Mother/Guardian's name _____			
Business phone # _____			
Father/ Guardian's name _____			
Business phone # _____			
If I cannot be reached in emergency, please contact an adult listed below. They may make decisions concerning my child.			
Name of adult _____			
_____	_____	_____	
Last	First	M.I.	
Name of adult _____			
_____	_____	_____	
Last	First	M.I.	
Signature _____			

## REGISTRATION FORM

*Please Print*

Student name

Last

First

M.I.

Address

House number and Street name

City

Zip Code

Birth Information

Month/ Day / Year

Birthplace

City

State/County

Legal Guardian

Last Name

First

Relationship

Spouse

Last Name

First

M.I.

Registration this school

Month / Day / Year

Original registration this district

Month / Day / Year

Ethnicity

Name of last school attended

City

State/County

Use this space for written comments:

Registered by school employee

Signature of person registering pupil

## HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY

Date \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

The California Education Code requires schools to determine the language(s) spoken at home by each student. This information is essential in order for schools to provide meaningful instruction for all students.

Your cooperation in helping us meet this important requirement is requested. Please answer the following questions and have your son/daughter return this form to his/her teacher. Thank you for your help.

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Last

First

Grade

Age

1. Which language did your son or daughter learn when he or she first began to talk? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What language does your son or daughter most frequently use at home? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What language do you use most frequently to speak to your son or daughter? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Name of the language most often spoken by the adults at home: \_\_\_\_\_

State of California  
Department of Education  
OPER-LS 77 R-6/78

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent or guardian



## **Communicating with School Personnel**

### **Messages home**

*Read and respond* to notes and other communication from school. Be sure to ask your child every couple of days whether there are any messages from school. These messages are often misplaced or lost.

### **Report cards**

One of those communications is the student's report card, which is sent to parents at least twice a year. The frequency varies according to the grade level of the student and according to local school district policy. Elementary report cards usually include the student's performance in the following subjects: language arts, mathematics, social science, health education, music, art. They may also contain the attendance record of the student, a citizenship grade, and comments by the teacher. The grade is based on a system of letters such as A, B, C, D and F; the report card usually explains the meaning of those letters. Usually the meaning of those letters is as follows: A= excellent, B= good, C= satisfactory (or S), D= needs improvement (or N), F= failure, U= unsatisfactory, O = outstanding, and I= incomplete.

Grades are an indication of how well the teacher thinks students are doing in each subject area. Different methods are used by teachers to determine a student's grade. Middle school and high school student's report cards include the title of the courses, the name of the student and teacher, grades for courses taken, a grade for citizenship, attendance record, and comments by teachers. When you receive the report card, you should *review*

*the teacher's comments* and the grades with your child. You should *sign it* and, if you wish, include your own comments on the report card then ask your child to return it to the school.

Other communications include permission slips, announcement of special events, newsletters, and so on.

## KINDERGARTEN REPORT CARD

<b>Basic Concepts</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Recognizes colors					
Recognizes shapes					
Recognizes positions					
Recognizes sizes					
<b>Language Concepts</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Understands oral language					
Listens					
Follows directions					
Expresses thoughts clearly					
<b>Math Concepts</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Understands use of numbers					
Recognizes numbers					
Writes numbers					
<b>Citizenship</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Responsible					
Respectful					
Cooperative					
Work Habits					
Completes work on time					
<b>Motor Skills</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Large muscle coordination					
Small muscle coordination					

Explanation of Marks:  
 G= Good  
 S= Satisfactory  
 I= Needs to Improve  
 NA= Not Applicable

### Attendance Record

Days absent \_\_\_\_\_  
 Days present \_\_\_\_\_  
 Days tardy \_\_\_\_\_

### Comments:

Quarter 1

Teacher Signature

Quarter 2

Teacher Signature

Quarter 3

Teacher Signature

Quarter 4

Teacher Signature

## Parent-teacher conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are a good opportunity for you to learn about your child's efforts and achievements or weaknesses and problems in school. Therefore, try to attend all those conferences.

### *Before the conference*

Look over your child's completed assignments and past report cards to review your child's strengths and weaknesses in academic performance as well as in behavior. Write down any questions you may want to ask the teacher. You may ask the teacher about the amount of time that your child should spend on homework, about what kind of help you can provide your child at home, about his or her performance and behavior at school.

Ask your child about feelings and concerns related to school and schoolmates. Use the conference to help the teacher better understand your child. Write down the points you think will help the teacher know your child a little better. Telling the teacher about your child's interests and strengths is helpful.

### *During the conference*

One factor contributing to a successful parent-teacher conference is making sure you arrive *a few minutes early*. The teacher has a tight schedule and many parents to meet; your late arrival will shorten the time for conference with the teacher. Prioritize your concerns and questions and get right to the first one without small talk. Let the teacher know that you are *concerned with your child's education* and want your child to get a high-quality education at school. If possible, use this opportunity to compliment the teacher on things that are going well for

your child. You can mention problems later, and end with other positive observations. Some questions that you might ask are:

#### *Regarding academics*

- What strengths and weaknesses does my child have in each of the subject areas?
- May I see some of the work that shows how my child is performing and progressing in those subjects?
- How is my child progressing in oral English, reading and writing, and the primary language?
- How has my child done on the state or national tests?
- What kinds of things will you do to improve my child's skills?
- How can I help my child at home in those areas?

#### *Regarding behavior*

- Does my child pay attention and do his work in school?
- Does my child misbehave?
- What is his attendance record?

If a problem exists, work with the teacher *to formulate a plan* to help your child. If the conference ends and you still have questions, *make an appointment for another day* when the teacher can have more time with you. Even if you are upset by or in disagreement with what the teacher says, make every effort not to argue, use discourteous language, or criticize the teacher personally.

#### *After the conference*

*Make a note* for yourself as to what you and the teacher actually said and planned together. Think of how you are going to put the plan into action at home.

*Discuss the proceedings with your child* and praise your

child's efforts. Let your child know that you are working closely with the teacher. Do not hesitate to *contact your child's teacher*:

- If you want to know more about your child's work and behavior at school.
- If you want to find out how to help your child at home and obtain academic materials to help your child.
- If your child seems unhappy or anxious at school or changes habits or behavior.
- If your child has problems at school such as not being able to meet course requirements or in relationships with peers.
- If you want to know how you can become more involved at school.
- If your child's academic work suddenly worsens.
- If a serious personal or family problem has arisen that may affect your child's behavior or concentration in school.
- If your child has been absent for several days and you want to know if there is any school work that can be done at home.

Keep in touch with the teacher by telephone or with written notes to continue to receive information on your child's progress between reporting periods.

### **Open house and other school events**

Only elementary schools have regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences. It is practically impossible for middle schools and high school to provide such conferences. While an elementary teacher may have the same thirty or so children all day, a high school teacher may have more than 150 students each day. One way to stay in contact with the school is to attend the school's open house and back-to-school night. It can give you a feel for the school.

The teacher will give you an overview of what will be taught during the year and explain instructional programs, grading policy, and homework requirements. You can see each teacher, hear the teacher's ideas and approaches, and find out what kind of requirements students must meet. This is an opportunity for you to establish a relationship with teachers, meet staff and other parents, ask questions of school personnel, and look at the textbooks, materials, and classrooms.

### **Advisory committees**

The purpose of advisory committees is to provide opportunities for parents to give advice and help the district make decisions concerning programs for limited English proficient (LEP) students and other students who receive extra help. The parents of children who are enrolled in these programs should be part of the decisions affecting their children, and have a chance to provide advice on their children's special needs.

LEP parents have the opportunity to serve on the District Bilingual Advisory Committee (DBAC), for the whole school district, and the School Bilingual Advisory Committee, for the school site. Members of the School Bilingual Advisory Committee are elected by parents of LEP students at the school and members of the DBAC are selected by the school committees. The district has the responsibility of notifying school and district parents of the initial election of committees and committee meetings in English and the primary language of parents. When the committees have been elected and are functioning, they can assume this notification responsibility. Meeting agendas should also be mailed to all committee members in English and their primary language.

## **Parents as volunteers**

Parents are valuable as volunteers. It is not necessary to have specific skills to serve as volunteers, just an interest in children and willingness to help. When the parents volunteer to assist in a classroom, they are trained to teach and will transfer to the home environment some of their knowledge about stimulating the growth of the child. As parents become more familiar with school and program requirements, they will be in a better position to help their children at home. Parents can also give advice and assistance as resource people to introduce young children to their own cultures through the use of stories, holidays, art exhibits, fairs, and various other activities. Parents who are professionals can discuss their own job situations or to act as a volunteer counselors.

## **Parent self-help groups**

Parents should become acquainted with other parents and form parent self-help groups to work on problems or issues of mutual concern. You may want to inform local school officials but you don't need permission of the school officials in order to form a parents' group. Parent self-help groups differ from Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA), which are associations for parents and teachers and typically are run by the principal of the school.

These groups can work closely with the PTA for the common good of the children. Parent self-help groups can join the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) Parents' Network which can help you learn about issues and strategies for effective action. The address of this committee is National Committee for Citizens in Education, 900 Second Street NE, Suite 8,

Washington DC 20002-3557; the telephone number is 800-638-9675. The NCCE has published many information books on parent involvement and has a Parent Involvement Kit available for purchase. The following organizations also provide helpful information on parent involvement in children's education:

- *The Home and School Institute*, 1201 16th Street, NW, Washington DC 20036; telephone (202) 466-3633.
- *National Congress of Parents and Teachers*, 700 North Russ Street, Chicago IL 60611; telephone (312) 787-0977.
- *Teachers Involve Parents in School (TIPS)*, John Hopkins University, 3401 North Charles Street, Baltimore MD 21218; telephone (301) 338-7570.
- *California Coalition of Parent/Community Involvement in Education (CCPIE)*, 810 Miranda Green, Palo Alto CA 94306.
- *Institute for Responsive Education*, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston MA 02215.



## Parents' Rights and Obligations

Beside moral obligations for their children, parents also have many legal obligations. Elementary and secondary education is *compulsory* in this country. You have an obligation to send your children to school, to compel your children to attend school. All children in California must attend school until graduation from senior high or until the age of 18. They must attend full-time until the age of 16. Law enforcement officers will intervene if you keep your school age children at home.

You also have to watch your child's school attendance. Each time your child is absent, you must notify the school with a phone call. When the child returns to school, you must send a note which includes your child's name, reason for absence, date of absence, your signature, and a phone number where you can be reached. There are three types of absence: *excused* if the school is notified and if the child is ill, attends a funeral, or has a medical or legal appointment; *unexcused* when the school is notified and the child is absent for any other reason; and *truancy* when the child is absent without permission or knowledge of the parents. Parents are held *responsible for their children's truancy*.

Vandalism is also the parents' responsibility. Parents are legally and financially responsible for their children's destruction or damage of school property. This includes books and materials which are loaned to the students, as well as the school facility. Parents are legally and financially held responsible for injuries inflicted on students or staff by their children.

As a parent, you also have rights. You have the right to request information about your child's education, to look at the records kept by the school about your child, to be consulted about educational decisions, to participate in school policy making, and to appeal decisions you think are not fair. You have the right to:

*Information about school policies, rules, and regulations*

- Health, medical examination, inoculations, and so on.
- Attendance: excused and unexcused absences, and truancy.  
The school has a responsibility to inform parents if the child is absent, and it is the parents' responsibility to inform the school if the child cannot attend school.
- Discipline procedures and behavior standards.
- Schedule for the school year: dates of parent-teacher conferences, holidays, report cards, and so on.
- Curriculum: subjects taught, organization of the curriculum, methods used, materials which can be borrowed, special programs, extracurricular activities and how to enroll your child in them. California law requires that for limited English proficient (LEP) students, the teaching should be done in a language comprehensible to the children. There is no specific approach or program required by law but the program adopted by the school/school district should *assure success* for the LEP students and enable them to have *equal access to educational opportunities*.
- Academic requirements: criteria for student evaluation and promotion, homework policies, graduation requirements, and so on.

*Access to:*

- Records kept by the school about your child. The student cumulative ("cum") record is an individual folder about the

student's academic performance, ability, and social profiles from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. This record may be seen by parents, in the presence of school personnel, but by no other person, unless subpoenaed by the court. You may challenge inaccurate, misleading, or discriminatory information.

- The principal or other personnel who work with your child.
- The teacher, at a time convenient for both parent and teacher, and with a translator, if needed.

*Be consulted*

- Before a change in the placement of your child is made.
- When your child must repeat a grade.
- When your child is enrolled in a special program.
- When your child is tested by personnel other than the teacher's regular classroom testing.

*Attend school board meetings.*

*Participate in parent organizations.*

*Appeal school decisions.*

- If you disagree with a decision affecting your child, or if you believe that the school did not treat your child fairly, you have the right to an appeal. You should find out who can resolve your problem. Complaints and concerns about your child's academic progress could begin with the classroom teacher. Make arrangements to meet with your child's teacher so that you can discuss your concerns. Request that someone translates for you if you do not understand English well. If the school cannot provide a translator, arrange to take your own translator. Proceed to the next level of authority if you

are not satisfied. The usual levels of authority are: teacher, counselor (in middle or high school), assistant principal, principal, associate superintendent, superintendent, and Board of Education. You have to follow the procedures established by the Board if you want to file a complaint against any employee.

As the parent of a LEP student, you have additional rights. You have the right to insist that the school provide language assistance services to your child as required by law. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires school districts to provide equal educational opportunity to all students, regardless of their national origin. The Equal Educational Opportunity Act passed in 1974 provides that all school districts are required to have special instructional programs for students with limited English proficiency that are designed to help them overcome language barriers. Many states have laws, regulations, and guidelines addressing the educational rights of LEP students. If the school plans to place your child in a bilingual program (one that teaches in a language other than English), you must be informed of the reasons why your child needs the program, the nature and educational objectives of the program, and the other options available to your child. The school must also inform you of the results of the English language testing that is done shortly after your child enrolls in school. The school should provide important information to you in a language you can understand. You may request a translator for parent-teacher conferences or for disciplinary or placement meetings with school personnel.

## Some Useful Books

- Arnold, Sarah et al. *Resource Guide on Parent and Citizen Participation in Education*. Boston MA: Institute for Responsible Education, 1988.
- Schimmel, David and Louis Fischer. *Parents, Schools, and the Law*. Washington DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1987.
- *Your School: How Well Is It Working?* Washington DC.: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1982.

## **Conclusion**

Helping your child achieve in school is a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, you help your child at home so that he or she will be well-prepared for school. On the other hand, you become involved with teachers and school personnel so you understand the kind of program your child receives at school, and know how well your child is doing. Following is a list of questions that help you decide what you need to do to help your child achieve in school.

### **Helping My Child at Home**

- Do I provide a quiet time and a place with necessary supplies for my child to study?
- Do I respect my child's feelings as I do those of other family members?
- Do I talk to my child about the importance of education in life?
- Do I encourage my child to do the best work possible without applying undue pressure?
- Do I show pleasure and pride in my child's accomplishment?  
Do I praise my child for a job well done or for effort made?
- Do I set up with my child home rules, such as a regular time for homework, limitations for watching television, and what will happen if homework is not completed?
- Do I check on my child's homework each night, sign and date

it, if required, and insist that the completed assignment is in my child's backpack before bedtime?

- Do I review homework that the teacher has returned and pay close attention to comments?
- Do I read to my child every day or encourage my child to read to me? Do I read to my child in our home language?
- Do I encourage my child to use the library for reading for assignments and for pleasure?

## **Involvement in School**

- Have I established and maintained a good working relationship with my child's teacher(s) and school principal and informed them that I am concerned with my child's education?
- Do I understand school rules, policies, programs and make my views known?
- Have I visited my child's classroom, observed the teacher's style, and looked over the instructional materials?
- Have I attended all the parent-teacher conferences and other school events?
- Am I well-prepared for the parent-teacher conferences? Do I ask the teacher about my child's strengths and weaknesses and request information on how I can help my child at home?
- Am I prepared to ask for extra help from the school to solve my child's learning and behavior problems?
- Have I considered joining the PTA or a parent's self-help group?
- Have I considered becoming a volunteer at the school?





## **PART TWO**

### **How to Involve Language Minority Parents in Education**

## **Why are Language Minority Parents not Involved in Education?**

Most school personnel experience frustration trying to involve language minority parents and getting little response from them. They often complain that the parents do not come to school events, such as parent-teacher conferences, advisory committee meetings, open-house, and so on. This often leads school personnel to conclude that the parents are not concerned with their children's education.

The causes for language minority parents' lack of involvement in school may originate on the parents' side or on the school's side. *From the parents' side*, this lack of involvement may come from cultural differences, language barriers, lack of knowledge of the American school system, or their socio-economic conditions. *From the school's side*, this situation may be attributed to little communication between the school and language minority home, shortage of teachers and staff who can communicate with the parents in their language, or a lack of awareness to cultural differences.

### **Barriers for Parents**

#### **Cultural differences**

Many language minority parents come from unitary societies with very centralized systems of education in which parents have no role to play in the schooling of their children. The Ministry

of Education controls every aspect of education, including budget, curriculum, graduation requirements and examinations, choice of textbooks, teacher preparation, licensing, recruitment, and assignment. Parents' non-involvement in school matters also derives from the belief that they should leave educational matters to school personnel who are experts. As lay people, they should not tell the experts what they should do in the field of their expertise. They also perceive academic education as the school's job, not the parents', who are concerned with moral education and character training. Hispanic and Asian parents, in particular, are reluctant to voice their concerns to school personnel. They believe that they are helpful to the school if they refrain from interfering with school personnel's work.

Immigrant parents frequently *lack knowledge* about American customs and the operation of the school system, about the instructional activities and programs of the local school, and about expectations for parent involvement. In order to encourage and facilitate immigrant parents in their greater involvement, school districts should help them understand how the American education system functions, especially at the local level. The school could, for instance, hold workshops for immigrant parents on the mechanics of the school system and on the school curriculum. In these workshops, parents who are knowledgeable can be encouraged to instruct other parents.

### Language barriers

Most language minority parents are not fluent in English. The lack of English proficiency prevents them from understanding what is being discussed and from expressing their views in conferences and meetings. The fear of embarrassment is a major

reason that causes them not to attend meetings. If the schools can provide interpreters, hire native-speaking staff to work with immigrant parents, or have bilingual aides available when the parents visit the school or attend meetings, limited English proficient parents would be encouraged to become more involved in school. If the aides have the respect of the parents, they can provide valuable assistance in increasing the level of parent involvement.

### **Socio-economic problems**

Most language minority parents are new immigrants who are preoccupied with economic survival. It is not unusual for them to hold two jobs, occupying all their waking hours. Many of them also lack transportation and child care. As one Hispanic parent put it: "My husband works two jobs and I have two babies. We got no time to go to school" (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990). To help overcome these obstacles, the school could hold activities in the evenings or on weekends, provide child care for parents who want to attend meetings, and provide transportation to and from activities. The school could also help arrange carpools or link parents to various groups and agencies in the community. Many immigrant parents feel insecure about their ability to be involved in school because of their limited education and low proficiency in English. The school should convey a positive attitude to the parents who attend activities and meetings and let them know that their presence is appreciated and they are important partners in the education of their children. Although most language minority parents are reluctant or unable to be involved in school, they uniformly express strong concern and interest in their children's education. Even though they doubt their ability to

become involved in their child's schooling, most indicate that they would like to learn more about how to help (Davies, 1987).

The attitudes of some teachers and administrators may have discouraged language minority parents' involvement in the past. Most school officials say they want parent participation, but in practice they offer parents only limited opportunities for involvement (Amundson, 1988). According to Liontos (1992), many teachers tend to ignore poor and minority parents, harboring doubts that less-educated parents want to become involved in their children's education. Recent research findings show that these parents care deeply about their children's education, but may not know how to help (Reeves, 1988). They want the school and teachers to advise them about how to help their children at home. Other teachers do not know how to involve less-educated parents and attribute the cause to these parent's lack of ability or willingness to help (Epstein, 1983). Bob Chase, vice-president of the National Education Association, says that for too long some schools have made parents feel like intruders (McCormick, 1990). However, as we shall see in the next section, praiseworthy efforts have been made by teachers and school personnel to reach out and involve minority parents in the education of their children, both at home and in school.

## **What the School Can Do to Help Language Minority Parents**

### **New Attitudes**

New attitudes regarding the relationship and partnership between home and school have inspired several successful programs that involve language minority parents. According to Becher (1984), the school should emphasize the many contributions that parents have made to their children's education and let them know that these efforts are valued. Parents have both the ability and interest to expand and enhance their parenting skills and the school can help families overcome obstacles to effective functioning with appropriate programs that teach them new skills and behaviors. Instead of blaming one other, based on misunderstanding and perceived obstacles, parents and teachers can develop genuine partnerships. We should not put the blame on either the family or the school for a child's learning problems, but we should work together to help the child achieve success. Language minority families should be respected for what they are and the school should look for their assets and strengths rather than viewing them as deficient. Collaboration between school, home, and community is needed to achieve successful involvement for language minority parents.

### **Better Home-School Relations**

Schools must make extra efforts to reach and involve

immigrant parents, keeping in mind the cultural differences. The first step is to begin documenting the barriers to parent involvement caused by such factors as family and work schedules, English proficiency, transportation, and child care problems, through parent-teacher conferences, telephone calls, or short questionnaires. Swick (1991) notes that the availability of such services as transportation and child care increases parents' participation significantly. Many schools schedule conferences in the evening as well as during the day, and school events at different times of the day throughout the year.

### **Messages home**

It is important that the school keep the lines of communication open. This consists of sending regular notes and newsletters, in a language that the parents understand, and obtaining feedback and information from the parents by phone or writing. When the parents are not proficient in English and the message home is written in English only, confusion may occur. Kneidek (1990) reported that a memo was sent home by a Portland, Oregon school to Hispanic parents saying that the children needed to bring bathing suits to school to go swimming. The memo was in English only. So, many Hispanic parents were confused when they were told by the children they needed swimming suits to go to school. Now the school translates all notices intended for parents.

Some language minority parents may not be able to read, even in their native language. To reach this group, the school needs bilingual teachers, aides, or bilingual volunteers. Joyce Epstein, interviewed by Brandt (1989), says, "we need to know not only whether the messages are going home, but who understands

them and who does not, and who we are reaching and who we are not reaching, and why." The school usually calls the parents to report a child's problem behavior or academic failure but it can also call the parents to let them know about the child's good behavior or school achievement. In this way the parents are accustomed to talking to the teachers and when problems occur, it is easier for the teacher to discuss the problems with the parents. The teacher may send letters to parents to praise their children if they do a good job at school or praise the parents for their active participation and support. At Ralph Waldo Emerson School in Rosemead, California, where 44% of the families are limited-English proficient, teachers send letters to the parents and ask for feedback about the school in the parents' native languages. Over 60% of the parents respond to their letters. Then they report back to the parents on what they plan to do about the parents' suggestions.

## **Newsletters**

Some schools have published newsletters to keep the parents informed about school happenings or to involve them further in their children's education. Items which could be included in those newsletters are highlights of classroom activities, notices of parent meetings, reports on parent advisory committees, news of upcoming events of interest to parents, student writings, and suggestions to parents for helping their children at home. In order to reach language minority parents who are not proficient in English, these newsletters should be bilingual.

## **Telephone**

Many schools have used the telephone to reach out to



parents. Some school districts such as San Diego have established homework hotlines for students and parents. At Lincoln Prep High School in San Diego, the school helps students and their families find needed community services through a school-sponsored telephone referral system (Chrispeels, 1991). It goes without saying that for limited English proficient parents such services would not be helpful if they are not in languages they can understand. For these parents, face-to-face communication in English is already difficult, and communication on the telephone adds difficulty for comprehension and expression. It should be noted that most parents become defensive if they think that every phone call will bring a bad report on their child. If teachers accustom parents to receiving regular calls just for keeping in touch and conveying information on school activities, it is easier for them to discuss problems when they occur.

### **Personal contact**

Liontos (1992) believes that the most effective form of communication between home and school is personal contact. With the exception of home visits, most other methods such as memos, phone calls, notices posted in local neighborhood places, and so on, proved ineffective. They did not convince parents to participate in school activities. Nicolau and Ramos (1990) stress that face to face conversation with the parents, in their primary languages, at their homes, or at the school, or anywhere a parent might be engaged, was the strategy deemed most effective by 98% of the project coordinators. If school personnel make visits before school starts, a child has the chance to become acquainted with the teacher before school begins. Home visits set a tone of mutual understanding that makes subsequent school-home communica-

tion more successful. Carol Ascher (1987) reported that programs offering home visits were more successful in involving disadvantaged parents than were programs requiring parents to visit the school. Both parents and schools benefit from home visits. But home visits can cause anxiety for both parents and school personnel. Most parents have little or no experience with school personnel coming into their homes and are uncertain about what to do. For parents who have experienced life under authoritarian regimes (such as Southeast Asian parents), in which teachers and school personnel are viewed as government agents coming to their home for spying, home visits by school personnel can be traumatic, or at least misunderstood. Likewise, many school personnel feel apprehensive about how they will be received by parents. In order to be effective, home visits must be prepared in advance with telephone and written communication to the parents, making clear the purpose of the visit to dispel any misunderstanding and apprehension. Of course, this advance preparation should be carried out by a staff member who can communicate in the primary language of the parents, directly or through competent interpreters.

Training must be provided to the home visitors to help them realize their responsibilities and acquire the skills they need. A relationship of trust should be established during the first visits. Then the home visitors can provide information to families about school curriculum, programs, rules and requirements. They could provide advice and materials on how the parents could help children with schoolwork. They should also listen to parents' concerns, needs, and interests, and provide information and referrals to community agencies for help. A successful home visitors program was established by the Davis A. Ellis School in Roxbury, Massachusetts, under the Schools Reaching Out project

(Davies, 1991).

The first meeting between parents and school personnel at school site should be in a non-threatening and informal atmosphere. The administrator should meet and talk personally to each parent. Social gatherings tend to make people relaxed and comfortable. Parents need to feel at home with teachers and administrators. They should feel that the school personnel really care about their participation and partnership in the education of their children.

### **Parent-teacher conferences**

For reasons mentioned earlier, language minority parents often feel uncomfortable to come to meetings. At the beginning of the school year, the school should communicate to parents about school policies and services, classroom goals for the year, and provide a few examples of what the children will be learning. Parent-teacher conferences should be planned in advance and parents should be informed of the nature and frequency of the conferences. For Southeast Asian parents, the invitation to come for a conference with school authorities may create a feeling of insecurity and apprehension. In their home countries, such meetings usually meant receiving information on their children's misbehavior and disciplinary consequences.

The school personnel should create an atmosphere in which the parents can feel free to communicate, share information, and ask questions. At the beginning of the conference, the teacher should let the parents ask their own questions and express their concerns. This is one way to convey respect for their input. If the parents sense an inviting school climate, their participation will increase. Teachers encourage parents to be

positive through the example they set in being supportive, responsive, and dependable. Comer (1988) believe that such attributes as warmth, openness and sensitivity on the part of the teacher will have a positive influence on the relationships with children and parents. The teacher should begin and end the conference by noting something positive about the child. Parents should be shown the projects that involved their children. Teachers should not make assumptions about a parent's level of knowledge or understanding, and should avoid talking down to parents. Non-verbal messages should convey respect and interest. Writing notes while parents are trying to express themselves conveys a lack of attention. After the conference, a note sent to parents to thank them for their participation and to summarize the major points discussed is an effective strategy.

In communicating with language minority parents, teachers and school personnel should be sensitive to cultural differences which are expressed both verbally and nonverbally, so as to avoid misunderstanding and unintended messages. With Asian parents, the English "yes" does not always mean an affirmative reply. There is the "cultural yes" which people use to acknowledge that they have just received the message, but it does not necessarily show agreement. It is used when they want to avoid a "no" which might displease the hearer. There is also the "grammatical yes" which is used as a response to a negative question (such as "Didn't you say you would come?" or "You said you wanted to come, didn't you?") to mean "no" because in Asian languages "yes" means "no" in these situations. ("Yes, you are right, I did not say that.") School personnel should be aware of this way that expressions mean different things because of the influence of the native language. For instance, an Asian parent would take the following statements as personal opinions rather than as advice: "I don't

think your child should take that course" or "Isn't it time for you to tell your child to stop playing truant?"

The meaning of nonverbal symbols also vary from one culture to another. Such American gestures as keeping the fingers crossed for wishing good luck, or forming a circle with the thumb and the forefinger to refer to something excellent or satisfactory have a profane meaning in some Asian or Latin American cultures (Huynh Dinh Te, 1988). Special attention should be given to cultural differences related to touching, eye contact, silence, and space between speaker and listener. Among immigrant parents, there are those who are new to this country and not accustomed to the American communication style, and those who have resided in this country for many years and have become acculturated. The teacher should rely on observation and sensitivity rather than on stereotypes or fixed formulas.

### **Electronic communication**

Recently many schools have tried new ways to reach parents through the use of electronic equipment. This includes radio, television, and audio or video tapes. In McAllen, Texas, the school district has created a community partnership with local radio stations. The district sponsors a weekly program in Spanish that encourages parents to become more involved in their children's education. Parents may check out copies of the script or a cassette tape from the parent coordinators at their schools (D'Angelo and Adler, 1991). Videotapes have been used to tape workshops, meetings, or other events of interest to parents. The school district may also produce videotapes showing the parents how to help their children at home with reading and other subjects, or effective ways to motivate their children. Videotapes can also be used

to allow parents to view their children at work in the classroom. since many parents cannot come to school to see what their children are doing.

### **Parents as Recruiters**

If some parents are already involved in school activities, encourage them to bring their friends to school events. Build a parent network and use the involved parents to recruit other parents who are still reluctant or apprehensive. These parents are more effective if they receive special leadership training on program objectives and school procedures.

## **Helping Parents to Help Their Children: Adult Education, ESL, Family Literacy Programs, and Parenting Classes**

### **ESL and Adult Education**

Language minority parents often have a low level of English proficiency and some have only a few years of formal education. Therefore, if the school helps them improve their educational levels and English proficiency, they will be in a better position to be involved in school affairs and help their children at home. Adult education classes for language minority parents are particularly effective. Studies have shown a relationship between the academic attainment of the mother and the school progress of the children. "It is unlikely that we will be able to make a difference for the child unless we place equal priority on education and academic remediation for the parent" (Berlin and Sum, 1988).

## Parent education programs

Most language minority parents lack the knowledge, skills, and resources to be involved in the education of their children. Parent education has become a popular component in many programs offered by school districts. School districts have implemented various successful projects to train parents how to meet the educational needs of their children at home. In Texas, one project ran an Intensive Training Institute for Hispanic families. They held an informal week-long intensive training institute for interested parents. The parents received information about child growth and development, motivation and self-esteem, and the process and techniques of language development. Parents also learned about the school system. The institute was followed by monthly workshops on what children are expected to learn in kindergarten. By the end of the project period, fifty-three parents were actively participating in school activities. The Parent-Child Education Program in Canton, Ohio is another endeavor to help parents involve in the education of their children. Family life classes combined language development and learning activities for children with classes on child development, communication skills, consumer education, health and safety issues for parents. In California, the Riverside County Office of Education has a parent training program called PRICE (Positive, Responsibility, Influence, Consequence, and Encouragement) designed to teach the basics of positive parenting. Skills taught include 1) assertive communication or alternatives to yelling and hitting; 2) limit-setting and follow through; 3) logical consequences; and 4) building self-esteem. Parents discuss and practice these skills in class before applying them each week at home. The program lasts for four weeks with a two-hour session each week. Translation into

Spanish and Chinese was provided for Spanish and Chinese-speaking parents. In Indianapolis, the school district collaborated with fifteen local businesses to provide parent education seminars at work sites during parents' lunch hours (Liontos, 1992). These are only a few illustrations of what a school can do to help parents' involvement in their children's education.

### **Family literacy programs**

In an effort to help limited English proficient parents participate in their children's education, Family English Literacy programs have been set up in many school districts nationwide. The projects vary widely in curriculum and methods, but the focus is on improving the academic performance of limited English proficient students by teaching the parents the knowledge and skills to help their children at home. An example of such programs in California is provided by Solana Beach School District. Participating families meet at an elementary school for two hours each week. Parents and children spend the first hours working together on ESL lessons that teach them how to adapt to American society. During the second hour, the children focus on literature, while the parents receive training in English and parenting (Liontos, 1992). The Sacramento-Stockton Family English Literacy Project developed a series of instructional texts in both English and in other languages to help language minority parents learn English as a second language and parenting skills. As of September, 1992, there were 26 Family English Literacy Programs (FELP) implemented in California (California Department of Education, Bilingual Education Office). These programs are most often funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA), of the U.S. Department of Education.



## Parent centers

Another effort to help parents become involved is the establishment of Parent Centers in schools or at other locations in low-income neighborhoods. If schools want to make parents feel welcome, they should set up a room or a place in the school that parents can feel comfortable. Before the project started at the David Ellis School in Boston, there was a sign outside of the school saying "Parents: Wait outside for your children." According to Vivian Johnson, project coordinator for Boston's Institute for Responsible Education (IRE), "the fact that this center exists really sends a (new) message to parents" (Jennings, 1990). The Edgar Evans Elementary School in Indianapolis began in 1979 a "Parents in Touch" project to promote stronger school-home partnerships. After hard work to reach out to parents, today the school has a Parent Center that includes resources for families on parenting skills and education. School textbooks are also available in the center to enable parents to follow their children's assignments. The school also offers monthly workshops in the evening and on weekends on such topics as "Discipline with love" and "Preparing children for tests." Social events are designed to make parents feel more comfortable at the school. Signs welcoming the parents line the hallways. There is also a "parent involvement" bulletin board that lists the names and contributions of participating parents. The principal sends a certificate of appreciation to frequent visitors to encourage them to return. The school has hired a local parent as a Community Liaison to visit families at home and encourage them to become involved in their children's learning. The liaison also acts as a buffer to help dispel negative feelings between parents and teachers. Parent Centers

can effectively promote parent involvement for they provide a place where the parents and teachers can meet informally, where parents can receive information and materials on how to help their children at home, and where parents have the opportunity to meet other parents.

***Resources for Parent Education Programs &  
Family English Literacy Programs***

- *California Department of Education*, 721 Capitol Mall, 2nd floor, Sacramento CA 94244. (Dolores Paz, Parent Involvement and Education Unit, for Home-School Partnership Training and Daniel Holt, Bilingual Education Office, for Family English Literacy Projects).
- *PRICE Program* (Lou Denti), Riverside County Office of Education, 3939 Thirteenth Street, P.O. Box 868, Riverside CA 92502.
- *Lawrence Hall of Science*, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. (Virginia Thompson, Director, Family Math/Equals Program).
- *Center for the Study of Parent Involvement*, 5000 Manila Avenue, Oakland CA 94609.
- *John Swett Unified School District Newsletter* (Lorna Wiggins), Rodeo CA 94572.
- *Lancaster Parent University* (Kenneth G. Almeida, Superintendent), Lancaster Elementary School District, Lancaster CA 93534.

- *Mission Possible* (Larry Anderson, President), Mission San Jose High School, Fremont CA 94539.
- *Parent Community Support System* (Margaret Wright, Project Coordinator), Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles CA 90047.
- *Parent University* (Diane Janicula), San Rafael City Schools, San Rafael CA 94801.
- *Parenting* (Pat Brown), Redwood City Elementary School District, Redwood City CA 94063.
- *Parenting Education Plan* (Susan Van Zant), Poway Unified School District, Poway CA 92604.
- *Parenting Now and In the Future* (Nancy Richards), Irvine Unified School District, Irvine CA 92713.
- *Parents in Action* (Carol J. Solis), Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, San Jose CA 95115.
- *Reading and Beyond* (Ellie Topolovac), Solana Beach School District, Solana Beach CA 92075.
- *Relationship Skills for Adolescents and Their Parents* (Janis Van Dreal), Kern Union High School District, Bakersfield CA 93301.
- *Literacy for Life Choices* (Carole Borg-Arvidson), Fountain Valley School District, Fountain Valley CA 92708.

- *Project REACH* (Carmen Melendez), Fremont Unified School District, Fremont CA 94538-5008.
- *Project Open Doors* (Rose Marie Bodrogi), Newport-Mesa Unified School District, Newport Beach CA 92663.
- *Project LIBRE* (Cherry Freeman de Leyve), Oceanside Unified School District, Oceanside CA 94607.
- *Project Rx for Success* (Susan Holtkamp), Solana Beach Elementary School District, Solana Beach CA 92075-1298.

## **Support for Teachers**

Classroom teachers play a key role in school-home interaction. However, most teachers are not taught how to work with parents. Only one percent of teachers surveyed by Epstein (1983) had completed a course in parent involvement (Krasnow, 1990). Many teachers are uninformed about other cultures. They have values, attitudes, and expectations that stem from their own background (usually middle-class Anglo) that is different from those of their language minority students. Misunderstandings often arise from cultural differences between teacher and student. Nicolau and Ramos (1990) reported that a teacher of Hispanic children complained about "the unresponsive Hispanic students who didn't look adults in the eye, and refused to participate in class unless directly called upon."

Teachers should be trained in understanding the characteristics, needs, and strengths of language minority students and their families, in effective communication techniques in crosscultural situations, and in the necessary skills for working with different ethnic groups. The training should first address the teachers' attitudes toward and motivation for working with language minority families. Teachers who see themselves as quite different from the parents of the children they teach may not have an easy transition to new behavior. It is obvious that this program of training would require a series of workshops rather than one-shot trainings. In their efforts to improve home-school relations, teachers need support from administrators and school boards.

Without commitment from the top, their efforts are not successful. San Diego School District policy recognizes that building the capacities of teachers, administrators, and other staff members to work effectively with families is a prerequisite for family school partnerships. To accomplish this goal, the district established a department to oversee policy implementation and to assist schools (Liontos, 1992).

## Conclusion

In planning a program for parent involvement, school personnel should keep the following points in mind:

- Parents will come to school meetings if they believe that the topics are useful for them and that they are respected and valued.
- The school should survey the families in the school area concerning the range of parent interests, needs, languages, and life styles; consult with the parents; and ask for input to find out what issues, concerns, and problems are of importance to them.
- Communicate clearly and frequently with parents to inform them about school policies and programs, school events, holidays, and so on. Parent-teacher conferences should be scheduled at least once a year at all grade levels.
- Create a school climate that is open, helpful, and friendly. Signs saying "Parents and visitors are welcome" are particularly helpful.
- The school should make parents feel comfortable. Informal settings are less intimidating, and small groups are more effective than large groups. During the first few meetings, the most important thing is to establish trust. Requiring active participation right away is sometime intimidating to parents.
- Refrain from asking in public questions that can make

parents uneasy, or look foolish and awkward.

- Provide interpreters, if the parents are not English proficient and child care and transportation, if feasible.
- Meetings and activities should be scheduled with consideration for parents' availability.
- Set aside a Parents' Room in school with necessary forms and materials for parents.
- Establish parent advisory committees to deal with specific school concerns. Use parents to attract other parents. If you keep them coming, word will spread in the community.
- Staff should be prepared with inservice workshops on cultural sensitivity and crosscultural communication. Effective programs are characterized by collaborative, equal relations between parents and program staff. Goals and activities should be jointly determined by parents and school personnel to ensure that programs methods and content are responsive to parents' needs and the cultural characteristics and values of ethnic populations. It takes time to generate interest. Parent involvement programs often require a considerable investment of time and sensitive work before progress is evident. It took seven years for the San Diego program and three years for the School Reach Out (SRO) programs to achieve expected results.

## Resources

The following organizations are concerned with parental involvement:

- *The Home and School Institute, Inc.*, Special Projects Office, 1201 16th Street NW, Suite 228, Washington DC 20036.



- *Institute for Responsive Education*. 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston MA 02215.
- *The Language Minority Program*, John Hopkins University, 3505 North Charles Street, Baltimore MD 21218.
- *National Committee for Citizens in Education*, 711 Second Street, Suite 100, Washington DC 20002-4307.
- *National Research and Development Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning*, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston MA 02215.
- *Parent Training and Information Centers, and Technical Assistance to Parent Projects*, 95 Berkeley Street, Suite 104, Boston MA 02116.

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## **PART THREE**

### **Primary Language Supplement**

#### **Vietnamese**

## English-Vietnamese Glossary

This glossary is intended for Vietnamese parents who are not proficient in English. We plan to prepare glossaries in other languages in the near future, as conditions permit.

N.B. Chúng tôi chỉ ghi nghĩa dùng trong sách này mà thôi. Mỗi chữ có thể có nhiều nghĩa khác nữa nếu dùng vào các trường-hợp khác.

accept	chấp-nhận
access (right to)	quyền được xem-xét (đến gần)
achievement	thành-tích
acknowledge	thừa-nhận
activity	sinh-hoạt
adjustment	sự thích-ứng
absence	sự vắng mặt (nghỉ học)
adult	người lớn (trưởng-thành)
Adult Education	giáo-dục tráng-niên
advisory	tư-vấn
affective	(thuộc về) tình-cảm
analyze	phân-tích
anxiety	sự lo-âu
apathy	sự lãnh-đạm, vô-tình
appeal	sự khiếu-nại



appointment	buổi hẹn
appropriate	thích-hợp
aspiration	nguyện-vọng
assignment	1. bài làm ; home assignment: bài làm ở nhà 2. sự phân-phối (giáo-chức)
assume	1. đảm nhận (trách-nhiệm) 2. cho rằng
attainment	thành-quả, thành-tích
authoritarian	độc-đoán, quá khắt-khe
available	sẵn có
avoid	tránh
avoidance	sự tránh-né
balance	sự quân-bình
basic	cơ-bản
birthdate	ngày sinh
birthplace	nơi sinh (sinh-quán)
blueprint	kế-hoạch
Board of Education	Hội-Đồng Quản-Trị Học-Khu. Còn gọi là Board of Trustees hay School Board.
breakdown	sự thất-bại, đổ-vỡ
bruise	vết bầm

capital	tư-bản
career	ngành-nghiep
centralized	tập-quyền
child abuse law	luật bảo-vệ thiếu nhi (luật chống ngược đãi thiếu-nhi)
citizenship	1. quyền công-dân 2. môn công-dân giáo dục; đức-dục
Civil Rights Act	Luật Dân-quyền
code	đạo luật
cognitive	(thuộc về) tri-thức
cold	(bệnh) cảm-hàn
collaboration	sự hợp-tác
comment	lời phê; teacher's comments: lời phê của thầy (cô) giáo
communicate	nói chuyện, giao-thiệp
completed	1. đã hoàn tất (làm xong), đầy đủ 2. đã điền lời khai (giấy-tờ, đơn)
compromise	1. thỏa-hiệp 2. làm nguy-hại
compulsory	bắt-buộc; compulsory education: giáo-dục cưỡng-bách
computation	làm toán, toán-pháp

concern	sự quan-tâm
conducive	thuận lợi, đưa đến
conference, parent-teacher	hội-kiến (họp) giữa phụ-huynh và giáo-chức
consistent	nhất-trí, không thay-đổi ý-kiến
consult	tham-vấn, hỏi ý-kiến
contact	tiếp-xúc
contribute	đóng-góp
cooperate	hợp-tác
corporal punishment	hình phạt bằng roi-vọt (đánh-đập)
counselor	giáo-sư cố-vấn (khải-đạo)
credential	giấy phép dạy-học
criteria	tiêu-chuẩn (số ít là 'criterion')
critical decision	quyết-định trọng-đại
cultural	thuộc về văn-hóa
curiosity	sự tò-mò
curriculum	học-trình
custody	(sự) nuôi-giữ, săn-sóc, canh-chừng
dampen	làm giảm đi, làm nhạt
decision	quyết-định
degree	mức-độ

Department of Education	1. (State) Bộ Giáo-Dục tiểu-bang 2. (Federal) Bộ Giáo-Dục Liên-bang Hoa-Kỳ
design	đặt ra
destruction	sự hủy-hoại
dictionary	tự điển
discipline	kỷ-luật
discriminatory	có tính cách kỳ-thị
discuss	bàn-luận
dismissal	sự sa-thải, sự giải-nhiệm
distract	làm xao lãng
DPT	(diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus) bệnh yết-hầu, ho-gà và phong đòn-gánh
dropout	bỏ học
drug	chất ma-túy
educated	có học-thức, học-thức cao. Trong tiếng Anh chữ "education" chỉ có nghĩa là học-vấn, kiến-thức, việc học-hành chứ không có nghĩa "giáo-dục" theo như chúng ta hiểu trong tiếng Việt tức là gồm có đức-dục và trí-dục. Vì vậy ở học đường Hoa-Kỳ người ta không chú-trọng đến đức-dục nhiều như ở Việt-Nam, Á châu và Âu-châu. Do đó

chữ "uneducated" chỉ có nghĩa là thiếu học, thất học chứ không phải "thiếu giáo-dục, vô giáo-dục."

effort	sự cố-gắng
emergency	tình-trạng khẩn-cấp
emotional	(thuộc về) xúc-cảm
energy	năng-lực
enthusiasm	lòng nhiệt-thành
ethnicity	tính-cách chủng-tộc
evaluation	sự đánh-giá, thẩm-định
evidence	bằng-chứng
examination	1. sự, buổi thi 2. sự quan-sát, khám-nghiệm 3. (medical) sự khám sức khỏe
exclusive	độc-hữu, dành riêng
excused	được phép, có sự cho phép
expectancy	sự trông tưởng
extrinsic	ngoại lai
factor	yếu-tố
failure	sự thất-bại
fan	quạt lên, nung-nấu

focus	trọng tâm
formulate (a plan)	lập kế-hoạch
frustration	sự bất-mãn
further	xa hơn, cao hơn (học-vấn)
game	trò chơi
gang	băng đảng
get away	thoát khỏi sự trừng phạt
goal	mục-đích
grade	1. điểm; higher grades: điểm cao hơn 2. lớp; first grade: lớp một
graduation	sự tốt-nghiệp
graduation requirement	điều-kiện tốt-nghiệp
guardian	người giám-hộ
habit	tập-quán (thói quen)
hamper	cản trở
handbook	sách chỉ-dẫn (chỉ-nam)
hard-working	chăm-chỉ
health	1. sức khỏe 2. (education) môn vệ-sinh
high school	trường trung-học

hinder	cản-trở, gây trở-ngại
homework	bài làm ở nhà
Home Language Survey	Bản Kiểm-kê Ngôn-ngữ
immunization	(shot) chích-ngừa
immunization record	(shot card) chứng-chỉ chích-ngừa
improvement	sự cải-tiến (cải-thiện)
improvement needed	cần cố-gắng hơn
inaccurate	không đúng, sai lầm
incentive	sự khích-lệ
incomplete	1. không đầy-đủ 2. chưa xong
inconsistent	bất nhất, hay thay-đổi
inflict (injury)	gây (thương-tích)
initiative	sáng-kiến
injury	thương-tích
inner fire	ngọn lửa nội-tâm, sự hăng-hái
inoculation	sự chích-ngừa
in spite of	mặc dầu
interrupt	cắt ngang, làm gián-đoạn
involvement	sự tham-gia
IQ (intelligence quotient)	chỉ-số thông minh

junior high school	trung-học sơ-cấp
keep track of	theo-dõi
keep up	để khỏi thua sút (bạn-bè)
key person	nhân vật chính (then-chốt)
lack	thiếu
late	trễ, chậm
law	luật-pháp
law enforcement officer	nhân-viên công-lực
legal	1. hợp pháp 2. thuộc về luật-pháp
leisure	sự nhàn-hạ
library	thư-viện
licensing	sự cấp giấy phép hành-nghề (dạy học)
limit	giới-hạn
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	kém (không thông-thạo) Anh-ngữ
link	giây liên-lạc
listen	lắng nghe
local	địa-phương
model	mẫu, gương (để noi theo)
moral	thuộc về tinh-thần, thuộc về luân-lý,



	có đạo-đức
motivation	động-lực, sự thúc-đẩy
mumps	bệnh quai-bị
need	nhu-cầu
negative	tiêu-cực
negotiate	thương-thuyết
objective	mục-tiêu
obligation	bổn-phận
observe	1. quan-sát 2. tôn-trọng
obvious	hiển-nhiên
once	1. một lần 2. ngày xưa, có lần
open communication	đối-thoại cởi-mở
Open House	đêm gặp-gỡ (hội-ngộ) phụ-huynh
opinion	quan-niệm
opportunity	cơ-hội Equal Educational Opportunity: cơ-hội giáo-dục đồng-đều
origin	nguồn-gốc

out of school	ngoài học-đường
parenting style	lối dạy con-cái
passivity	sự thụ-động
peer	bạn học
performance (academic)	thành-tích học-vấn
permission slip	giấy cho phép
permissive parents	phụ-huynh quá dễ-dãi
perplexing	làm hoang-mang
personnel	nhân-viên
physical education	thể-dục
placement	sự sắp lớp
policy maker	người lập chính-sách
polio	bệnh tê-liệt
poll	cuộc trưng-cầu ý-kiến
point	điểm
positive	tích-cực
praise	sự (lời) khen-ngợi
prepare	chuẩn-bị, sửa-soạn
prioritize	lập ưu-tiên
privilege	đặc-ân
problem	sự khó-khăn

proceeding	sự thảo-luận (giữa phụ-huynh và giáo-chức)
proficiency	sự thông-thạo
program	chương-trình
prompt	1. thúc-đẩy 2. nhắc nhở
proper	thích-đáng
psychology	tâm-lý
pursue	theo đuổi
put down	coi thường, khinh-dể
quarter	tam-cá-nguyệt, mỗi ba tháng
race (racial)	chủng-tộc (thuộc về chủng-tộc)
rapport	mối tương-quan; mối liên-hệ; sự giao-thiệp
realistic	thực-tiến
recognition	sự thừa-nhận
record	hồ-sơ học-sinh, học-bạ
recreation	sự giải-trí
recruitment	sự tuyển-dụng
recurrent	xảy ra đều-đặn

reform	cải-cách
refrain	tránh
registration	sự ghi-danh, ghi tên (đăng-ký)
regulation	thể-lệ
reinforce	tăng cường
relaxation	sự nghỉ-ngơi
repeat (a grade)	học lại lớp
research	ngiên-cứu; researcher: nhà nghiên-cứu
reserved	dành riêng
respond	trả-lời, đáp-ứng
responsibility	trách-nhiệm
result	kết-quả
review	duyet lại, xem lại
reward	thưởng, phần thưởng
rights	quyền
rubella	bệnh ban sởi (sởi)
ruler	thước kẻ
sarcasm	sự châm-biếm
schedule	thời (khóa) biểu
school board	ban quản-trị học khu, như board of

	education
score (test)	điểm thi
secretary (school)	thư-ký học đường
select	lựa-chọn
self-control	sự tự-chủ
self-discipline	tự giữ kỷ-luật
shelter	chỗ trú-ẩn
sibling	anh-chị-em ruột
sick	ốm (bệnh)
social status	địa-vị xã-hội
spouse	người phối-ngẫu (vợ hay chồng)
standard	tiêu-chuẩn
star	ngôi sao (bằng giấy màu để thưởng cho học-sinh)
stay out	đi-chơi ở ngoài, ngủ ngoài (vắng nhà)
stifle	bóp chết, làm tắt thở
strategy	chiến-lược
strength	1. ưu điểm 2. sức mạnh
structure	cơ-cấu
stupid	ngu-đần
subject matter	môn học

succeed	thành-công
summarize	tóm-lược
sustained attention	sự chú-ý được kéo dài
synthesize	tổng-hợp
system	hệ-thống
tardy	trễ (đi học trễ)
TB test	thử-nghiệm bệnh lao
test	trắc nghiệm; thử nghiệm
tight schedule	thời giờ eo-hẹp
tolerate	tha-thứ
transfer	thuyên-chuyển
trip	cuộc du-khảo
truancy	sự trốn-học
trust	lòng tin-cậy
tutor	người dạy kèm
undermine	phá-hoại
unexcused (absence)	(vắng mặt) không có phép
unsatisfactory	không đủ tiêu-chuẩn (kém)
undue	quá mức
undue pressure	sự ép buộc (thúc đẩy) quá mức

updated	được cập-nhật hóa
vest (the power)	đặt (quyền) vào
volunteer	người tình-nguyện
weakness	nhược-điểm
well-prepared	được chuẩn-bị kỹ
worry	sự lo-âu
worsen	trở nên tồi-tệ
worthless	vô dụng, vô giá-trị
zoo	sở thú

# TÓM-LƯỢC BẰNG VIỆT-NGỮ

## Lời Nói Đầu

Gần đây các nhà giáo-dục rất chú-tâm đến vấn-đề phụ-huynh tham gia vào việc-học của con-em. Phụ-huynh gốc ngôn-ngữ thiểu-số thường tự hỏi làm sao mình có thể tham-gia khi kém Anh-ngữ, ít học-thức, và không có kinh-nghiệm về hệ-thống giáo-dục ở Hoa-Kỳ. Mặt khác, các nhân-viên học-đường Hoa-Kỳ thường trách phụ-huynh gốc ngôn-ngữ thiểu số không quan-tâm đến việc học của con-em vì thấy phụ-huynh ít khi tham gia các buổi họp ở trường.

Mục-đích của sách này là đề-nghị một vài phương-cách để phụ-huynh tham-gia các sinh-hoạt ở học-đường và giúp con-em học-hành ở nhà và giúp nhân-viên học-đường hiểu rõ những khó-khăn cũng như nỗi ưu-tư của phụ-huynh gốc thiểu-số. Chúng tôi sẽ đề-nghị một vài phương-cách giúp giáo-chức lôi-cuốn phụ-huynh tham gia các sinh-hoạt học-đường. Sự cộng-tác giữa học-đường và gia-đình rất cần-thiết vì sự-kiện này sẽ giúp các em học-hành và thích-ứng với xã-hội mới dễ-dàng hơn.



## VAI-TRÒ CỦA GIA-ĐÌNH VÀ HỌC-ĐƯỜNG TRONG VIỆC DẠY-DỖ CON EM

Nhiều phụ-huynh vẫn nghĩ rằng chỉ có nhà-trường mới có nhiệm-vụ dạy-dỗ học-sinh. Họ không nhận-thức rằng phụ-huynh đóng một vai-trò rất trọng-yếu trong việc học-hành của con-em ở trường. Nếu trong gia-đình các em được cha-mẹ giúp-đỡ trong việc học thì đến trường các em sẽ học-hành dễ-dàng hơn.

Có nhiều lý-do để phụ-huynh tham-gia vào việc học của con em. Nhờ có sự tham-gia này mà phụ-huynh thấy rõ con-em mình học-hành ở trường ra sao, học-đường biết được nguyên-vọng và nhu-cầu của phụ-huynh và các em học-sinh được cha-mẹ giúp-đỡ hữu-hiệu hơn. Giáo-chức cũng như các vị có nhiệm-vụ quản-trị học đường và thiết lập chính-sách giáo-dục đều công-nhận rằng sự tham-gia của phụ-huynh vào việc học-hành của con-em là một điều rất quan-trọng. Các nhà nghiên-cứu giáo-dục kết-luận rằng các em học-sinh có phụ-huynh tham-gia đều có thành-tích học-vấn cao hơn những em có phụ-huynh không tham-gia.

Các em học-sinh chỉ sống ở trường có một phần nhỏ thì-giờ. Phần lớn thì-giờ các em sống ngoài học-đường và người dạy-dỗ các em chính là cha-mẹ. Những gì các em học ở trường cần phải được gia-đình tăng-cường. Vì tình-trạng xã-hội và lối sinh-hoạt ở Hoa-Kỳ, rất ít phụ-huynh có thể tiếp-xúc với học-đường. Trong những chương sau đây chúng tôi sẽ trình-bày cách-thức mà phụ-huynh có thể dùng để giúp con-em học-hành tại nhà để đạt những kết-quả tốt ở học-đường.

## PHỤ-HUYNH GIÚP CON-EM HỌC-HÀNH Ở NHÀ

### Bầu không-khí thuận-lợi cho việc học.

Phụ-huynh phải tạo cho con-em một bầu không-khí thuận lợi cho việc học.

#### *Điều-kiện vật-chất*

Các em phải có một chỗ yên-tĩnh, ấm-áp, sáng-sủa và đầy-đủ học-liệu để ngồi học. Các em sẽ bị chia-trí nếu khi ngồi học có người chuyện-trò, nghe nhạc hoặc xem truyền-hình.

#### *Điều-kiện tinh-thần*

Nếu đầu-óc không bị lo-lắng, bực-bội thì các em mới có thể học-hành được. Học giỏi không nhờ ở trí thông-minh xuất-chúng mà nhờ ở sự cố-gắng của học-sinh và sự khuyến-khích của cha-mẹ và thầy-giáo.

### Động-lực và tự-tín

#### *Động Lực*

Nếu không có động-lực thúc-đẩy các em thì những cố-gắng của thầy-giáo cũng trở nên vô-ích. Phải làm sao cho các em thấy được nhu-cầu học-hành thì các em mới chăm-học. Phụ-huynh phải giúp các em cảm thấy thích học và cần phải học (động-lực nội-tâm). Phụ-huynh cũng có thể khen-ngợi và tưởng-thưởng để các em thêm hứng-thú trong việc học (động lực ngoại-lai). Thái-độ của phụ-huynh cũng có thể tăng thêm **động lực** ham học ở các em.

- Quý vị phải tỏ cho con-em thấy rằng giáo-dục rất quan-trọng.

- Quý vị phải tỏ cho con-em thấy sự lưu-tâm của quý vị đến việc học của chúng.
- Quý vị phải tỏ cho con-em thấy mình muốn chúng học hành giỏi, tuy-nhiên quý vị cũng đừng ép-buộc và thúc-dẩy chúng quá mức.
- Khích-lệ sự cố-gắng. Khi các em cố-gắng thì quý vị nên khen-ngợi các em.

Thái-độ tiêu-cực của phụ-huynh có thể bóp-nghẹt động lực thúc-dẩy các em học-hành. Quý vị nên tránh những điều sau đây:

- Coi thường những điều con-em ưa-thích.
- Dứt ngang những điều con-em đang thích-thú làm.

### *Lòng Tự-tín*

Lòng tự-tín là yếu-tố quan-trọng để thành-công ở học-đường. Một học-sinh thông-minh mà kém tự-tín thì học sẽ thua một học-sinh kém thông-minh mà có lòng tự-tín cao hơn. Nếu thiếu tự-tín thì các em sẽ không dám làm những điều gì mới-lạ và tránh những việc khó-khăn, có nhiều thử-thách.

Quý vị có thể giúp con-em tạo lòng tự-tín bằng cách:

- Cho các em thấy là các em được thương-yêu và quý-trọng.
- Lắng nghe những điều các em nói.
- Nhắc-nhở và khen-ngợi những điều tốt các em làm.
- Giao trách-nhiệm cho các em.
- Dùng những từ-ngữ tạo nên lòng tự-tín ở các em.
- Nêu gương tốt để các em noi theo.

Thái-độ của phụ-huynh cũng có thể hủy-diệt niềm tự-tín ở các em như những lời nói tiêu-cực, chàm tự-ái và chàm-biểu như, "Đồ vô-dụng! Đồ ngu!"

### **Lập Thời-biểu và Kiểm-soát**

Quý vị nên cùng với con em lập một thời-khóa-biểu và đặt các qui-luật mà các em phải tuân theo. Thời-biểu phải có đủ thì-giờ để các em học-hành, nghỉ-ngơi, xem truyền-hình, giải-trí, và ngủ. Các nhà nghiên-cứu giáo-dục cho rằng xem quá nhiều truyền-hình sẽ có hại cho việc học. Các qui-luật phải định rõ khi nào các em có thể xem truyền hình, khi nào phải tắt truyền hình, khi nào phải làm bài và nếu không làm xong bài thì sẽ có hậu-quả gì.

### *Kiểm-soát và Kỷ-luật*

Sự kiểm-soát rất cần-thiết vì có kiểm-soát mới biết được các em có tuân theo những qui-luật đặt ra hay không. Đây là những điều quý vị nên làm:

- Mỗi đêm hỏi con-em đã làm xong bài chưa. Nói cho chúng biết rằng làm bài là một công việc rất quan-trọng.
- Bảo các em bỏ những bài đã làm xong vào cặp trước khi đi ngủ.
- Bảo các em đưa quý vị xem bài làm đã được thầy (cô) giáo chấm điểm và trả lại.
- Theo dõi điểm các kỳ thi và thành-tích biểu. Hàng năm quý vị nên xem học-bạ của con em. Nếu các em gặp trở-ngại trong việc học-hành thì quý vị nên tiếp-xúc với học-đường để nhờ giúp-đỡ.

Quý vị phải dạy các em biết giới-hạn trong mọi hành-động và

hậu-quả tốt hay xấu của mỗi hành-động. Đặt giới hạn sẽ giúp các em tự áp-dụng kỷ-luật. Quý vị nên tránh thái-độ quá khắt-khe hoặc quá buông-trôi. Sandy Dornbusch tin rằng cả hai thái-độ đó đều bất-lợi cho việc học-hành của con cái. Phụ-huynh phải nghiêm khắc có chừng mực.

Ở các nước Á-châu pháp-luật cho phép và nhiều khi còn khuyến-khích việc dùng roi-vọt để trừng-trị mỗi khi con-em phạm lỗi. Tại Hoa-Kỳ phần lớn các Tiểu-bang đều cấm dùng roi-vọt làm hình-phạt. Luật Bảo-vệ Thiếu-nhi qui-định rằng nếu cha-mẹ dùng roi vọt để đánh-đập con-cái gây thương-tích thì cha-mẹ sẽ bị luật-pháp trừng-trị và có thể mất quyền nuôi-giữ con-cái. Những phụ-huynh dùng phương-pháp "cạo-gió" để chữa-trị con-em bị cảm-cúm nên lưu-ý đến đạo-luật này vì sau khi cạo-gió thân-thể các em có những dấu vết bầm-tím như bị đánh-đập. Nhân-viên học-đường có thể tưởng lầm các em bị bạo-hành và sẽ trình-báo với cảnh-sát. Như vậy quý vị có thể bị lôi-thôi với pháp-luật. Muốn khỏi bị phiền-phức, quý vị nên tránh "cạo gió" cho con-em.

### Tạo Tập-quán tốt

Quý vị nên tập cho con-em có những tập-quán tốt để giúp con-em học-hành dễ-dàng và đỡ mất thì-giờ. Trong cặp các em bao giờ cũng phải có đủ tập vở, ngòi bút, bút chì, và một quyển lịch để ghi ngày các em phải nộp bài. Tập các em sử-dụng phương-pháp sưu-tầm, ghi-chép, phân-tích, và tổng-hợp các tài-liệu đã thu-thập được. Các em còn phải biết cách ôn bài, cách ghi-nhớ các sự-kiện và các con số, ghi-nhớ những chữ quan-trọng và tóm-lược các ý chính của một đoạn văn. Quý vị nên khuyến-khích con-em dùng thư-viện học-đường và thư-viện công-cộng và có những tập-quán tốt như trả sách đúng hạn. Quý vị nên khuyên các em nhờ nhân-viên thư-viện chỉ-bảo cách-thức sử-dụng thư-viện và mượn sách.

## Giúp đỡ con-em tại nhà.

### *Chuẩn-bị con-em nhập-học*

Ở Hoa-Kỳ phụ-huynh phải chuẩn bị con em sẵn-sàng khi ghi danh nhập học tạo cho các em có đủ kinh-nghiệm trí-óc, cơ-năng, tâm-lý, xã-hội để các em có thể thành-công ở học đường. Nếu không thì các em sẽ không theo kịp các bạn đồng lớp.

Quý vị nên nói chuyện với con-em, đọc cho các em nghe và khuyến-khích các em tìm hiểu sự-vật. Những sinh-hoạt ngoài học-đường như viếng thăm sở thú, công-viên, viện bảo-tàng, vườn bách-thú đều rất bổ-ích vì những sinh-hoạt này sẽ giúp cho các em hiểu được những gì sẽ được giảng-day ở trường. Mỗi tuần các em phải dự các sinh-hoạt ngoài học-đường như đọc truyện giải-trí, xem các chương-trình truyền-hình giáo-dục, nói chuyện với người lớn, xem các trò thể-thao.

### *Giúp các em làm bài ở nhà*

Bài làm ở nhà là để bổ-túc và tăng-cường những gì đã học ở trường. Quý vị phải giúp các em bắt đầu làm bài tập từ lúc đang còn nhỏ. Thì-giờ để làm bài ở nhà tùy-thuộc tuổi-tác, cấp lớp, và giáo-viên. Thường-thường từ Mẫu-giáo đến lớp 3, mỗi đêm các em chỉ cần bỏ ra 20 phút, từ lớp 4 đến lớp 6 chừng 40 phút và cấp trung học một giờ rưỡi. Quý vị nên giúp-đỡ, giải-thích cách làm bài nhưng *không nên làm đùm* bài cho các em. Nên khuyến-khích các em ở cùng xóm hợp thành những toán nhỏ (hai, ba em) để cùng học với nhau. Nếu quý vị không thể giúp được thì nên tìm một người để giúp-đỡ, dạy kèm như anh-chị, bà-con, hay một sinh viên quen biết. Phụ-huynh có thể giúp-đỡ các em bằng những cách sau đây:

Ngữ-Văn. Đọc văn. Nếu các em chưa biết đọc thì quý vị đọc cho các em nghe. Nếu các em đã biết đọc thì bảo các em đọc cho quý vị nghe. Để các em tự-ý chọn sách nào mà các em thích. Nên khen-ngợi mỗi khi các em cố-gắng. Khuyến-khích các em dùng tự-điển và các loại sách tra-cứu khác. Nên tập cho các em dùng thư-viện ngay từ tuổi còn thơ.

Viết-Văn. Cho các em thấy rằng quý vị cũng luôn luôn dùng đến cây viết. Nên khuyến-khích các em viết thư cho bạn-bè, thân-nhân hơn là dùng điện-thoại. Bảo các em ghi chép những sự-việc hàng ngày trong nhật-ký.

Nói và Nghe. Quý vị nên nói-chuyện với các em ngay từ lúc các em biết nói. Quý vị nên nghe các em nói và nói chuyện với các em hàng ngày. Nói-chuyện với các em bằng tiếng Việt để các em không quên tiếng mẹ-đẻ.

Toán-Học. Quý vị có thể dùng những buổi đi chợ để dạy các em về giá-cả, trọng-lượng. Để các em trả tiền và đếm tiền. Nên dùng các trò chơi cần sử-dụng xảo-năng tính-toán, đo-lường, so sánh, ước-lượng. Nên chỉ cho các em cách tính giờ và xem giờ.

Khoa-Học. Giúp các em hiểu-biết về thú-vật và thảo-mộc bằng cách đem các em xem sở thú, công-viên, vườn bách-thảo, hồ nuôi cá. Nói chuyện với các em về sức-khỏe, dinh-dưỡng và cơ-thể người-ta. Để các em sử-dụng các dụng-cụ, máy-móc trong gia-đình. Đó là những điều có thể giúp con-em học môn khoa-học dễ-dàng hơn.

Sử-Địa. Quý vị nên bàn-luận với con-em về các biến-cố thời-sự được đăng-tải trong báo chí hay được chiếu trên truyền-hình và đưa các em xem viện bảo-tàng, di-tích lịch-sử, các chợ-phiên hay các buổi trưng-bày văn-hóa.

### **Chuẩn-bị con em vào Đại-Học**

Nếu quý vị muốn con-em sau này vào đại-học thì quý vị phải chuẩn-bị sớm, đừng chờ tới năm cuối của cấp Trung-học mới bắt-đầu. Quý vị phải nhờ giáo-sư cố-vấn giúp con-em chọn các môn học ở trung-học có thể thoả-mãn điều-kiện vào Đại-học.

#### **Các Trường Đại-Học Cộng-Đồng**

Muốn được nhận vào học ở các trường Đại-Học Cộng-Đồng thì sinh-viên phải có bằng tốt-nghiệp Trung-học Hoa-Kỳ, hoặc các bằng-cấp tương-đương, hoặc đã được 18 tuổi. Chương trình học gồm hai năm và sinh-viên tốt-nghiệp được cấp bằng Đại-học Sơ-cấp (Associate in Arts). Sau khi tốt-nghiệp sinh-viên có thể chuyển đến Đại-học bốn năm. Sinh-viên cần phải hỏi giáo-sư cố-vấn để biết các lớp nào được chấp-nhận vào chương-trình đại-học bốn năm.

#### **Các Trường Đại-học Bốn Năm**

Mỗi trường đều có thể-lệ riêng, tuy-nhiên tất cả đều đòi-hỏi số điểm trung-bình cao ở cấp trung-học. Giáo-sư cố-vấn có thể chỉ-dẫn và giúp học sinh lựa chọn các môn-học và trường Đại-học thích-hợp với khả-năng. Có nhiều loại học-bổng và trợ-cấp giúp sinh-viên có điều-kiện tài-chánh để theo-đuổi việc học. Nhân-viên Phòng Tài-trợ ở viện Đại-học mà con em quý vị ghi-



danh sẽ hướng-dẫn cách xin tài-trợ. Quý vị cũng có thể viết thư xin mẫu-đơn tại địa-chỉ sau đây: California Student Aid Commission: 1401 Fifth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

## Nói Chuyện Cùng Con-Em

Mỗi ngày quý-vị nên dành chút thì-giờ nói chuyện cùng con-em về việc học của chúng và lắng nghe những điều con-em nói về việc học-hành và nhà-trường. Khi cần, quý vị nên liên-lạc với nhân-viên học-đường tìm cách giải-quyết các khó -khăn. Ở Hoa-kỳ vì đời sống kinh tế và xã-hội, phụ-huynh ít có thì giờ để chuyện-trò cùng con-cái. Quý vị nên tránh những lời nói tiêu-cực, châm biếm. Nếu các em không nói chuyện cùng quý vị được thì chúng sẽ đi tìm bạn-bè để chuyện-trò và giải-tỏa ản-ức. Một trong những nguyên-nhân chính đưa các em đến các băng-đảng là vì có sự *lạnh-nhạt và ngăn cách giữa phụ-huynh và con-em*

Quý vị cần thực-hành những điều quý-vị thường nói và nêu gương tốt cho các em noi theo để các em có tư-cách đứng-đắn, ngôn-ngữ trang-nhã, phục-sức chỉnh-tề và lòng tự-trọng, tự-tín cao-độ. Một vài tác-phẩm sau đây sẽ giúp quý vị hiểu-biết thêm về các vấn-đề vừa được thảo-luận.

## THAM-GIA CÁC SINH-HOẠT HỌC-ĐƯỜNG

### Trường Mới, Hệ-Thống Giáo-Dục Mới, và Vai-Trò Mới Của Phụ-Huynh.

Hệ-thống giáo-dục Hoa-kỳ khác với hệ-thống giáo-dục các nước về nhiều phương-diện. Ở phần lớn các nước Á-châu, giáo-dục có tính-cách tập-quyền. Bộ Giáo-dục hoàn-toàn chi-phối và kiểm-soát nền giáo-dục toàn-quốc.

Ở Hoa-Kỳ giáo-dục có tính-cách tản-quyền và thuộc quyền-hạn của chính-phủ tiểu-bang. Ở mỗi địa-phương việc quản-trị giáo-dục là do một Hội-đồng quản-trị Học-khu đảm-nhận. Hội-đồng này do dân-chúng địa-phương bầu ra. Tuy quyền giáo-dục thuộc Tiểu bang nhưng chính-phủ tiểu-bang lại ủy-thác quyền này cho các Hội-đồng quản-trị Học-khu địa-phương, trong việc quyết-định chương-trình, học-liệu, tuyển-dụng nhân-viên. Bộ Giáo-dục Liên-bang không có quyền trực-tiếp điều-khiển và cũng không tuyển-dụng phân-phối, và chuyển-chuyển giáo-chức. Mỗi học-khu có tính-cách độc-lập đối với các học-khu khác nên giáo-chức không thể xin chuyển-chuyển từ học-khu này đến học-khu khác như ở Việt-nam. Chính-phủ Tiểu-bang qui-định điều-kiện đào-tạo giáo-chức và cấp-phát chứng-chỉ hành-nghề.

Vì việc kiểm-soát giáo-dục thuộc về địa-phương nên phụ-huynh tham-gia trực-tiếp vào việc giáo-dục tại địa-phương. Nếu phụ-huynh không tham-gia thì nhà trường sẽ hiểu lầm rằng phụ-huynh không quan-tâm đến việc học-hành của con-em.

### Tìm Hiểu Trường Học Của Con-em Quý Vị

Ở Hoa-kỳ niên học bắt đầu vào đầu tháng chín dương-lịch

và kết-thúc vào tháng sáu. Học-sinh phải ghi danh vào những ngày đầu tháng chín. Sự sắp-xếp vào lớp được dựa trên số tuổi và kinh-nghiệm học-hành của các em. Các trường học công-lập đều miễn-phí và học-sinh được mượn sách học cho mỗi năm học. Học-sinh phải trả tiền ăn trưa, những phụ-huynh đủ điều-kiện có thể làm đơn xin miễn-phí hoặc chỉ trả lệ-phí nhẹ.

### *Ghi-Danh*

Khi ghi-danh, quý vị phải xuất-trình giấy-tờ chứng-minh ngày sinh của con em, địa-chỉ nhà ở và sở làm của phụ-huynh, giấy chích-ngừa đầy-đủ. Quý vị còn phải điền bảng lục-vấn ngôn-ngữ chính dùng trong gia-đình nữa. Học-sinh phải ghi-danh tại một trường thuộc phạm-vi cư-trú của phụ huynh. Muốn ghi danh ở một trường khác, phụ-huynh phải làm đơn xin và nêu rõ lý-do.

Bậc Tiểu-học Hoa-kỳ gồm có 6, 8 hay 5 năm nhưng tổng số các lớp cho tiểu-học và trung-học phải đủ 12 năm. Nếu cấp tiểu-học có 8 năm thì cấp trung-học có 4 năm. Nếu cấp tiểu-học có 6 năm thì trung-học có hai cấp: sơ-cấp 2 năm (lớp 7 và 8) và cao-cấp 4 năm. Nếu tiểu-học chỉ có 5 năm thì trung học sơ cấp có ba năm (lớp 6, 7, và 8) và trung học cao cấp 4 năm. Lớp mẫu-giáo thường được xếp cùng với các lớp tiểu-học. Quý vị cần liên-lạc với trường con-em theo học để hỏi rõ về chi-tiết các môn học được giảng-day vì có những dị-biệt tùy theo địa-phương.

### *Chi-tiết về Học-trình.*

Quý vị nên tìm-hiểu về chính-sách giáo-dục, điều-lệ về kỷ-luật, chương-trình giảng-day và điều-kiện tốt-nghiệp áp-dụng trong học-khu của mình. Thường-thường mỗi trường đều có sách chỉ-nam, quý vị có thể hỏi viên thư-ký học-đường về sách này. Luật-pháp tiểu-bang California buộc học sinh phải thi ít nhất là một lần ở các lớp 4 đến 6 và một lần khác ở các lớp 10 hoặc 11 về Đọc-văn, Viết-

văn và Toán. Muốn tốt-nghiệp, học sinh phải theo học các lớp bắt-buộc và thi đậu kỳ thi khả-năng của học-khu. Mỗi học-khu quyết-định về các môn phải thi, vì vậy quý vị phải hỏi rõ điều-kiện tốt-nghiệp ở học-khu mình.

Ngoài học trình chung, chính-phủ tiểu-bang và liên-bang còn thiết-lập những chương-trình đặc-biệt dành cho các học sinh có những nhu-cầu riêng-biệt. Những chương-trình đặc-biệt được áp-dụng hiện-nay là:

*Giáo-dục song-ngữ.* Chương-trình này giúp các em chưa thông-thạo Anh-ngữ có thể học Anh-ngữ và các môn học khác nhờ dùng tiếng mẹ-đẻ.

*Giáo-dục đặc-biệt.* Chương-trình này dành cho các em có những năng-khiếu đặc biệt hoặc có những tật-nguyên vật-chất hay tâm-thần. Quý vị nên hỏi nhà-trường để biết chi-tiết rõ-ràng. Ngoài ra, quý vị cũng có thể đọc thêm sách: *Chỉ-Nam Giáo-Dục dành cho Phụ-Huynh Học-Sinh* (bản Việt-ngữ) do Bộ Giáo-Dục Tiểu-Bang California xuất-bản. Địa-chỉ: P.O. Box 944-272, Sacramento, CA. 94244-2720.

### *Gặp Nhân-viên Học-đường*

Người quý vị gặp đầu-tiên là viên thư-ký học-đường. Nhân-viên này sẽ cho quý vị biết rõ về trường mà con em quý vị đang học. Quý vị nên xin gặp hiệu-trưởng, giáo-chức và cố-vấn học-đường. Nhân-viên này rất quan-trọng vì họ sẽ giúp con-em quý vị chọn lớp, theo dõi việc học-hành, và chuẩn bị lên đại-học. Quý vị cũng nên xin phép viếng trường và lớp-học của con em mình để quý vị thấy rõ sinh-hoạt của con-em ở trường. Nếu không rành Anh-ngữ thì quý vị nên nhờ nhà trường tìm người thông-dịch cho quý vị.

### **Giao-thiệp Với Nhân-viên Học-đường**

### *Giấy-tờ gửi về nhà*

Quý vị nên đọc và trả-lời những giấy tờ mà nhà-trường gửi về. Vài ngày một lần quý vị nên hỏi con-em xem có giấy tờ gì không.

### *Thành-tích biểu*

Ít nhất nhà-trường phải gửi thành-tích biểu của con-em cho quý vị mỗi năm hai lần. Nhiều hay ít là tùy ở trường học địa-phương. Thành-tích biểu ghi thành-tích của con em quý vị về các môn học và hạnh kiểm. Giáo-viên dùng mẫu-tự A, B, C, để cho điểm và thường giải-thích ý-nghĩa của các mẫu-tự đó. Thường-thường A là Ưu, B là Bình, C là Thứ, D là Kém, cần cố gắng và F là rất kém, hỏng. U là kém, không đạt tiêu-chuẩn, và I là bài làm không đầy-đủ.

Quý vị nên cùng con-em đọc số điểm và lời phê của giáo-viên rồi ký tên và đưa con em giao-hoàn nhà-trường. Ngoài ra nhà-trường còn gửi những giấy tờ khác như giấy cho phép, bản tin, hoặc những giấy thông-báo về các sự-kIỆN và sinh-hoạt ở trường.

### *Hội-kiến giữa phụ-huynh và giáo-chức*

Quý vị nên tham-dự những buổi họp này vì nhờ đó mà quý vị biết rõ về việc học, hạnh-kiểm và thành-tích của con-em.

### *Trước khi hội-kiến*

- Quý vị nên đọc lại những thành-tích biểu của con em trong các tháng trước, ghi những điều cần hỏi giáo-viên về con-em mình hoặc về cách giúp đỡ con em ở nhà hoặc những điều có thể giúp giáo-viên hiểu con-em mình hơn.
- Hỏi con-em những điều chúng muốn quý vị thảo-luận

với nhà-trường.

### *Trong lúc hội-kiến*

- Quý vị nên đến sớm một vài phút, nếu đến chậm sẽ mất thì-giờ thảo-luận với giáo-viên. Quý vị cần cho nhà- trường biết là quý vị rất quan-tâm đến việc học của con-em và muốn con-em có một nền giáo-dục tốt. Nên cảm-ơn và khen-ngợi giáo-viên đã dạy-dỗ con-em trước khi bàn đến những vấn-đề khác.
- Quý vị có thể hỏi những điều sau đây:

#### *Về học-trình*

- Ưu và nhược-điểm của con-em trong mỗi môn học
- Cho tôi xem bài tập của con-em trong các môn đó
- Kết quả các kỳ thi của con-em
- Thầy/Cô sẽ dùng những phương-thức nào để giúp con-em cải-tiến?
- Tôi phải làm những gì để giúp con-em cải-tiến?

#### *Về hạnh-kiểm*

- Con tôi có học-hành chăm-chỉ và làm bài đầy-đủ không?
- Con tôi có hạnh kiểm tốt không?
- Con tôi có đi học chuyên-cần không ?

Nếu con-em gặp khó-khăn thì quý vị hãy cùng với giáo-viên lập kế-hoạch để giúp-đỡ con-em vượt trở-ngại.

### *Sau khi hội-kiến*

- Ghi lại những điều đã được thảo-luận và xem cần phải thực-hiện những kế-hoạch đã bàn, nếu có.

- Nói cho con-em biết những điều đã bàn với giáo-viên và cho con-em biết rằng quý vị cộng-tác chặt-chẽ với học-đường để giúp đỡ chúng trong việc học.

Quý vị cần tiếp-xúc với nhà-trường mỗi khi:

- Quý vị muốn biết về việc học và hạnh-kiểm của con-em ở trường.
- Quý vị muốn biết cách giúp-đỡ việc học của con-em ở nhà và muốn có tài-liệu về vấn-đề này.
- Con-em gặp khó-khăn trong việc học hay với bạn-bè.
- Con-em cảm thấy lo-lắng, bức-dọc vì những gì xảy ra ở trường hoặc học-hành trở nên kém-cỏi.
- Con-em nghỉ học nhiều ngày và muốn học thêm để bù lại.

### Các Sự-kiện Khác

Chỉ các trường tiểu-học mới có những buổi hội-kiến định-kỳ cho phụ-huynh và giáo-chức. Các trường trung-học sơ-cấp và cao-cấp không thể tổ-chức những buổi hội-kiến như vậy vì mỗi giáo-chức phải dạy nhiều lớp và học sinh có đến hàng trăm. Do đó nhà trường tổ-chức Đêm Gặp-gỡ Phụ-huynh ở mỗi đầu niên-khoá. Quý vị cần phải tham-dự những buổi gặp-gỡ này để nghe các giáo-viên nói về cách-thức giảng-dạy, thể-lệ bài làm ở nhà v.v... quý vị sẽ gặp các nhân-viên học-đường khác, các phụ-huynh khác, đồng-thời có thể nhìn tận mắt sách vở, học-liệu, và phòng ốc ở trường con quý vị theo học.

### Các Tiểu-ban Tư-vấn

Mục-đích các tiểu-ban này là tạo cơ-hội để phụ-huynh khuyến-

cáo học-khu trong việc quyết-định chính-sách, chương-trình liên-quan đến việc dạy-dỗ các học sinh kém Anh-ngữ và giúp học-khu kiểm-kê ngôn-ngữ gốc của học- sinh và nhu-cầu giáo-dục địa-phương. Có hai cấp tiểu-ban tư-vấn: cấp trường địa-phương cho mỗi trường và cấp học-khu chung, cho tất cả các trường trong học-khu.

### *Phụ-huynh Làm Việc Tình-nguyên*

Phụ-huynh có thể tình-nguyên làm việc giúp học-khu. Việc này rất hữu-ích vì khi giúp đỡ giáo-viên quý vị sẽ thấy rõ các em học-hành như thế nào và về nhà quý vị sẽ có thể giúp đỡ các em dễ-dàng hơn. Quý vị cũng có thể giúp giáo-viên trình-bày về các khía cạnh văn-hóa Việt-nam để học-sinh hiểu biết về văn-hóa các nước. Với những vị có nghề chuyên-môn, quý vị có thể giảng cho các em học-sinh biết về nghề-nghiệp của quý vị.

### *Các Hội Phụ-Huynh*

Ngoài hội Phụ-huynh và Giáo-chức (PTA) quý vị cũng có thể lập các hội phụ-huynh tương-trợ mà không cần phải có sự đồng-ý hay cho phép của nhân-viên học-đường. Tuy nhiên quý vị nên cho nhà-trường biết để tiếp-xúc và cộng-tác. Sự cộng-tác giữa các hội vừa kể có thể giúp cải-tiến việc học-hành của con-em.



## QUYỀN-HẠN VÀ BỐN-PHẬN CỦA PHỤ-HUYNH

Ngoài bốn-phận tinh-thần đối với con-em, phụ-huynh còn có bốn-phận pháp-lý. Luật-pháp Hoa-kỳ buộc rằng quý vị phải cho con đi học hết cấp tiểu-học và trung-học. Tiểu-bang California buộc các em thiếu-nhi phải đi-học cho đến khi tốt-nghiệp trung-học hoặc đã được 18 tuổi. Các em phải học toàn thời-gian cho đến tuổi 16. Nếu quý vị không cho con đi học thì nhân-viên công-lực có thể can-thiệp.

Mỗi khi các em nghỉ học quý vị phải báo cho nhà-trường biết và khi đi học lại các em phải mang theo giấy chứng-nhận của quý vị gửi nhà-trường trong đó kê khai tên học sinh vắng mặt, lý-do nghỉ học, ngày nghỉ học, chữ ký của quý vị và số điện thoại để nhà-trường tiếp-xúc. Nếu các em trốn-học, thì quý vị phải lãnh trách-nhiệm.

Nếu con-em quý vị hủy-hoại tài-sản học-đường, kể cả sách-vở, học-liệu nhà trường cho mượn thì quý vị phải chịu trách-nhiệm bồi-thường. Quý vị cũng phải chịu trách-nhiệm về các thương-tích mà con-em quý vị gây ra cho kẻ khác.

Quý vị có quyền: Được biết các chính-sách và thể-lệ liên-quan đến vấn-đề :

- Sức khỏe: khám bệnh, chích-ngừa, đau-ốm
- Chuyên-cần: vắng mặt có phép hoặc không có phép
- Kỷ-luật và hạnh-kiểm
- Thời-biểu: năm học bắt-đầu và kết-thúc, các ngày lễ, những buổi phụ-huynh giáo-chức hội kiến, thành-tích biểu
- Học-trình: các môn được giảng-dạy, các chương-trình đặc-biệt. Pháp-luật định rằng các em kém Anh-ngữ phải được dạy cách nào để các em có thể hiểu được và có thể thành-công ở học-đường, hưởng được cơ hội giáo-dục đồng-đều.

- Tiêu-chuẩn học-vấn: tiêu-chuẩn thẩm-định thành-tích, điều-kiện tốt-nghiep.

#### *Xem-xét tài-liệu*

- Xem học bạ của con em. Chỉ có nhân-viên học-đường và phụ-huynh mới có quyền xem hồ-sơ học-bạ. Người ngoài không được xem trừ phi có trát-tòa. Nếu có những chi-tiết sai lầm hay kỳ-thị thì phụ-huynh có thể khiếu-nại để sửa-đổi.
- Gặp hiệu-trưởng, giáo-chức theo hẹn trước.
- Hội-kiến với giáo-viên vào giờ-giấc thuận tiện cho cả đôi bên, có thông dịch nếu cần.

#### *Được Tham-vấn*

- Trước khi nhà trường thay-đổi việc xếp-lớp cho con em.
- Khi con-em của quý vị bị học lại lớp.
- Khi con-em quý vị ghi danh học những chương trình đặc biệt.

#### *Dự-thính các buổi họp của Hội-Đồng Quản-trị Học-khu.*

#### *Tham-dự các tổ-chức phụ-huynh.*

*Khiếu-nại về những quyết-định của nhà-trường nếu quý vị không đồng-ý hoặc cảm thấy bị kỳ-thị.*

Người đầu tiên mà quý vị có thể gặp để than-phiên là giáo-viên, rồi đến hiệu-trưởng, giám-đốc học-khu và hội-đồng quản-trị. Quý vị phải theo đúng thể-lệ của Học-khu về vấn đề khiếu-nại. Là

phụ-huynh gốc thiếu-số, quý vị có quyền yêu cầu học-đường phải giúp đỡ con em mình vượt trở-ngại ngôn-ngữ để học-hành có kết-quả tốt, như luật-pháp đã quy-định, có quyền được biết lý-do vì sao con em mình phải theo học những lớp đặc-biệt. Giấy tờ nhà-trường gửi cho quý vị phải viết bằng một ngôn-ngữ mà quý vị có thể thông-hiểu.

Nếu quý vị không thông-thạo Anh-ngữ thì quý vị có thể yêu-cầu nhà-trường cung-ứng người thông-dịch mỗi khi cần giao-thiệp hoặc họp với nhân-viên học đường.

## KẾT LUẬN

Có hai khía cạnh trong việc giúp con em thành-công ở học đường: Ở nhà, phụ-huynh phải giúp đỡ để con em có thể học-hành thoải mái: Ở học đường, phụ-huynh phải giao tiếp với nhân-viên học-đường để biết rõ con em học-hành ra sao và giúp nhà-trường hiểu rõ nhu-cầu của con em. Sau đây là tóm lược những điều quý vị nên tự vấn hầu giúp con-em trong việc học-hành:

### Tại nhà:

- Con tôi có chỗ học yên-tĩnh và đầy đủ học-liệu không?
- Tôi có xem trọng con tôi như những người khác trong gia đình không?
- Tôi có nói chuyện với con tôi về sự quan-trọng của giáo-dục đối với tương-lai của chúng không?