

THESIS

THE PARENT AND TEACHER CONNECTION:
THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

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Many classroom teachers feel unprepared to work with families who speak limited English or no English at all. Teachers need help knowing that schools are accountable for the achievement of these students. Diverse languages and cultures present barriers to families that must be overcome by teachers if students are to achieve educational success. Nothing is more important, though it is often overlooked, than interventions outside the classroom between teachers and parents—*the parent involvement factor*. As such, teachers must learn how to reach out to parents in order to become more involved with teachers.

Throughout this thesis, in both my literature review and two case studies, I have documented the importance of schools working through parental involvement to increase achievement. I attempted to answer two questions: “How important are interactions between teachers and parents?” and “How much can we, as teachers, expect of parents?” The answers in short are that: 1) parent-teacher interactions are immensely important, and 2) we can expect a great deal from parents.

My interactions with Mrs. Sanchez and Jen and Annie in the case studies provide an interesting look into how they grew from uninvolved parents to dedicated, pro-active parents involved with their children's teachers and schools. Based on conclusions from my literature review and case studies, another contribution of my thesis is to present practical techniques for teachers to increase parental involvement with such positive ideas as making positive phone calls and home visits.

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INTRODUCTION

Eleanor Roosevelt, author and wife of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, once said, “The giving of love is an education in itself.” I agree, and for my purposes, I would put it this way: to give education itself is also a form of love. After traveling in Mexico, and graduating from college, my first job was teaching English to corporate businessmen from South America, Asia, and the Middle East. After that job, I was hooked on a career of teaching English to those of all ages who want to or need to learn the foreign language of English. After marriage I took on the job of educating our own children along with the public schools. Later I taught English as a Second Language (ESL) to immigrant adults, this time to roofers, waiters, waitresses, and mothers and fathers who don’t understand our school system. For the last eleven years, I have taught elementary children who are Limited English Proficient (LEP), speaking, listening, reading, writing, or some combination of these. Just as their parents must learn how to shop, work or go to the doctor in their second language, students need to learn in English fairly quickly as the schools will teach all content areas to all students. Core classes such as math and reading are a challenge if students are not fluent in English.

Over the last ten years the United States has been overwhelmed with the growing population and thus higher numbers of students who are not fluent in English. The number of English Language Learners (ELL) is stretching the need in many schools across the nation. For example, in 2000 we didn’t see large numbers of ELLs in our small district in Colorado. However, soon we were hiring new ESL teachers every year and sending them to get their ESL Endorsement. The chart shows the gradual growth from 1999-2000 up to the school year 2008-2009. The growth of ELL enrollment was 51.1% compared to the 7.22% enrollment growth of all the other students.

Table 1

The Growing Number of Limited English Proficient Learner Students 1999/00 – 2008/09^a

Year	Total PK-12 Enrollment	PK-12 Growth Since 1997-99	Total EL Enrollment	EL Growth Since 1997-99
99-00	47,356,089	2.61%	4,416,580	24.74%
00-01	47,665,483	3.28%	4,584,947	29.49%
01-02	48,296,777	4.64%	4,750,920	34.18%
02-03	49,478,583	7.20%	5,044,361	42.47%
03-04	49,618,529	7.51%	5,013,539	41.60%
04-05	48,982,898	6.13%	5,119,561	44.59%
05-06	49,324,849	6.87%	5,074,572	43.32%
06-07	49,863,427	7.89%	5,218,800	47.40%
07-08	49,914,453	7.98%	5,297,935	49.63%
08-09	49,487,174	7.22%	5,346,673	51.01%

Source: The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Education Programs (NCELA). (2009). “How Many School-Aged Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students Are There in the U.S.?” www.ncela.gwu.edu; Web. 8 Jan. 2012.

a. According to 2008-2009, data from the states, approximately 5,346,673 English Language Learners (ELLs) are enrolled in grades pre-K through 12. In 2008-09, of all states California enrolled the largest number of public school LEP students, with 1,512,122.

As an ESL teacher, I reach out not only to my students but also to their parents who may be overlooked as a potential source of intervention. For many reasons, parents or family members often don't see the opportunity to be more involved in their children's education. However, few would disagree that diverse languages and cultures can become a barrier to students having success. There are some initiatives that lead to achievement; for example,

training teachers to teach non-English speaking students with approaches such as Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) (Chen, Kyle, and McIntyre 7). However, while SIOP is an excellent tool, another intervention, outside the classroom, is too often ignored: the parent involvement factor.

Today governments as well as administrators are asking their educators to create programs that may draw parents into becoming involved. Research and common sense dictate that if parents value education, their children will as well. However, for those teachers to be successful partners with parents, they must help confront two kinds of barriers. The *logistical* barriers will challenge many migrant and immigrant parents as they juggle finances, jobs, childcare, and often diverse languages, and they believe they cannot be involved. Yet, the next barriers are the most difficult to confront, for they are invisible barriers of *attitude* and *expectation*.

Educators must consider and reflect on different attitudes toward norms for U.S. schools versus families from other countries, especially in the areas of child rearing, parental roles, and the role of the teacher. Parents are frustrated when they cannot help their children or communicate with school; they feel judged by occupation, status, or ethnicity. When teachers don't ask or listen, or take time for personal reflection in regards to parent's challenges, educators and parents will not understand one another. By accepting the reality of important cultural barriers, and considering one's own cultural norms, one can craft research-based effective programs that will improve the parent involvement factor (Sosa 2-3). For example, some teachers approach the logistical obstacles by identifying one of the barriers of money, time, childcare, or language; in this way the teacher can have success getting to know the parents over coffee and thus teacher and parent can find one or more solutions together. In the next section,

I will address the No Child Left Behind Act, and while government is trying to find better ways for ELLs to learn and close the achievement gap, it seems that a teacher and parent can also be successful in finding solutions.

In this thesis I will present several researched-based programs and strategies, followed by the outcomes of two case studies. The case studies will clarify the necessity of parental involvement for children and also begin to discern what is the most important agency for this involvement. Much of the thesis is based on a literature review including the educational needs from three years through third year. The escalating numbers of migrant and immigrant families in the United States over the last decade, and the necessity for best methods to support the Latino (Hispanic) families of elementary children, in particular. I will demonstrate the importance of parents becoming involved with teachers in order to reach the goal of greater educational achievement. The thesis also presents a brief history of parental involvement followed by factors that often become barriers to the process, as well as suggestions to better enable parent involvement.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

In 2000 the achievement gap continued to widen, particularly between Hispanic and all other children. Transitional bilingual programs came under fire even though they addressed a small number of English language learners. Most English language learners were still being educated in mainstream classrooms with only a few hours per week in a small group (Salomone 9). This was a time when people were seeking improvement in academics. When George W. Bush became president in 2000, his administration worked to change federal spending for education. The controversial result was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. 107-110, 301 et seq. (NCLB).

The two goals of this law are English language acquisition and accountability. Language acquisition means that LEP students shall be taught English in one of several manners: English immersion, English as a second language, or Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). Accountability is the government checking on the children's English proficiency with a yearly assessment and other testing on academic content growth, such as math and reading. In the early years of No Child Left Behind, educators received little guidance for choosing programs other than the criteria as "scientifically based research" and "demonstrated to be effective." Teachers could hear administrators announcing at the end of the day—"whatever it takes!" (139, 157)

We are now in the tenth year of No Child Left Behind. The NCLB brought an important focus to four million immigrants and migrants then, and now to over five million students, who will receive attention as a Limited English Proficient (LEP) or English Language Learners (ELLs). Many immigrants and migrants will need support for a long time to become fluent in English. Because of NCLB, minority groups are noticed and receive more ELL teachers and support strategies. Still, administrators and educators are looking for new ways to help teachers

to teach the core content and to help students become fluent in English. High numbers of students in our public schools—including the high LEP populations—can be overwhelming, challenging and sometimes unanticipated.

Therefore this is a time for schools to take the opportunity to invite non-fluent English speaking parents to be involved in their children's schoolwork, and if they do not, educators will miss a rich untapped resource (Barillas 4-8). The high population is also of diverse languages, background cultures, and compounded with different ages and length of time they have been in the U.S. The schools continue to look for solutions—and here we have people who can teach their own children, with some help; people who can teach math with some translating. In one family there may be writers of poems. We need to have adult English classes. Instead of finding more teachers in school, find the parents who can teach with some training and translating.

MOTIVATIONS FOR INVITATIONS

Drawing on a broad range of recent literature, many researchers such as Hoover-Dempsey et al. discovered important data related to education outcomes. Their literature includes studies that explicitly focus on parents' homework involvement with related sources helpful to understanding parents' decisions (1). According to the research, the child is in part an agent in receiving homework help from parents. In trying to determine why parents become involved in homework, Hoover-Dempsey et al. discovered a motivational model that attracts parents and persuades them to take steps toward helping their children in their educational progress. Specifically, parents appear to involve themselves in their children's homework for three major reasons: "when they should; when they believe their involvement will make a positive difference; and when they perceive that their children or their children's teacher want their involvement, similar to an invitation" (195). Dempsey et al. offer these valuable criteria as important motivational models; these and other strategies will help to persuade parents to get involved in their children's education. These investigators argue that while it is generally accepted that parent involvement is connected to "well developed education programs," there is need for more research in order to better understand the motivation for parent involvement, the actual content of the involvement, and the outcomes influenced by parent involvement.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

What is the current challenge of educating our English Language Learners, and how big is the need? English language learners represent the fastest growing segment of the school-age population (The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Education Programs (NCELA) (2009); “How Many School Aged Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students Are There in the U.S.?” www.ncela.gwu.edu; Web. 8 Jan. 2012). It is generally accepted that our schools continue to seek improvement in both academics and behavior. The United States government, now with No Child Left Behind (NCLB), recognizes the importance of parent involvement (McREL brief 2). These students will take the yearly state assessment, and in order for schools to meet the yearly goals, administrators must consider the academic progress of the ELL’s. As the population of ELL students keeps rising, teachers will benefit from working with parents as partners (8).

A growing body of research supports the opinion that parents’ attitudes, behaviors, and activities related to their children’s education, influence students’ learning and educational success (Huang and Mason (20) and Delgado-Gait (61). When students see that parents value learning, they tend to *also* value learning (Hoover-Dempsey et. al 195). In Britain as well, governments are urging teachers to engage more closely with families and to develop literacy activities to help teachers and parents to “share their knowledge about children” (Feiler et al.12). Also critical is the importance of studies of young children who are kindergarten-age and younger. Much literature based on research concludes that parent’s robust conversations with children—in playing, story reading, and developing children’s literacy in the preschool years, is critical to developing language, vocabulary, comprehension and reading fluency. Parents often

learn more about parenting skills through family literacy programs (Smetana 290, Walsh, Blewitt 273, S  n  chal 59).

This study will examine the many obstacles, visible and invisible, that deter parents from getting involved in their children’s school and education. Dr. Joyce L. Epstein has conceptualized and researched this involvement in Six Levels of involvement, beginning with Level I: theories of homework—interacting with parents. This scaffolding allows for newcomers or those who are not fluent in English to begin with the early levels of involvement. While the study is focusing on elementary age, we realize that kindergarteners have flash cards to take home and words to learn. Therefore homework is always a point for family support and getting help and helping others. (Epstein 1-2).

The study is grounded in research that is applied to families of diverse cultures and languages and children from birth through third grade. Educators and researchers find that if children are ready to learn by Kindergarten then likely they will be able to read in third grade. Robertson insists that, “It will set the stage for life-long learning.” (Carpinteria Children’s Collaborative Project). Furthermore, I introduce a variety of solutions and tools to draw parents into a productive and two-way partnership and to inform educators how to understand and reach out to families.

According to the U.S. Census, the Latino (or Hispanic) population will comprise one quarter of the U.S. population by 2050 (Pe  a et.al 1). For this reason I focus on the needs and successes of Latino or Hispanic families, although most research or motivational models will also apply to other ethnicities, as well. Quezada et al. agree and give evidence that language achievement, attitudes toward school, and parent-child relationships improve when parents and family members get involved in the students’ education (32). However, the authors state that

“getting Latino parents involved in school activities hasn’t always been a priority for the schools.” The authors claim that the school may see parents as “people who serve the school rather than as partners.” For this reason, Quesada et al. argue that further study is required to develop effective strategies for attracting Latino families (32).

Similarly, Huang and Mason found that while parent involvement appears beneficial to some parents and children, other research indicates that African Americans are uninvolved in urban school setting (20). However, in their semi-structured group interviews, Huang and Mason found from their data analysis that African Americans are motivated to be involved in their children’s learning, “when they can form relationships (with other adults), when they know they can influence their children’s learning, and when they can find ways for their children to achieve success.” All of the participants in their research were involved in the family literacy program, which indicates that those who were interviewed prefer the community environment that they don’t find at school-based activities (20). Many literacy programs facilitate meeting with families and community, which eventually may motivate parents to be involved in school activities. However, Daniel-White argues that parent involvement programs “have been developed in schools in ways that are valued by middle class parents to the exclusion of language minority families, their language, and their culture” (3). She also claims that many programs are founded upon an ideology that minority families have less ability in parenting or “a cultural deficit approach to parenting.” Finally, Danielle-White claims that school based programs do not provide immigrant parents the tools they need to help their children.

The research demonstrates that many parents are ready to be involved. They believe that children’s schooling is a normal responsibility regardless of quantity, interest, or concerns about children’s ability. They are willing to be involved because they believe it will make a difference

in the child's life. Those who feel confident believe that their help will cause positive student outcomes. Lastly, parents decide to be involved in homework because they sense an invitation from their child or the child's teacher. Thus, the parents believe their help for the student is wanted or expected. Walker et al. insists that parent involvement is a powerful tool for letting parents and family know what the child is learning, gives parents and children a reason to talk about school, and gives teachers an opportunity to hear from parents about their children.

CULTURES AND BARRIERS

Nevertheless there are thousands of migrants or immigrants who, although they have lived in the United States for decades, enjoy their culture and languages that are different than that of Euro-American culture. However, when newcomers arrive, they may know little about the traditions and expectations of North American schools. If they are not fluent in English, even if the invitation is helpful and sincere, they will not be able to understand. I will explain how English-speaking Euro-Americans are more easily drawn into parent involvement than Latinos, and then I will demonstrate how American schools and teachers are creating different kinds of invitations to include Latino families.

While many are generally accepting that parent involvement is connected to successful programs, other voices maintain that there is a need for more research. Regardless of opinions there are problems with transportation, time, and childcare, and many parents have barriers of language and culture. I maintain that there is a lack of communication not only because parents don't speak English and teachers don't speak the parents' first language, although that too is a significant obstacle. I argue that more importantly there is an invisible barrier that can separate schools and families. This has been called a "barrier of Attitude and Expectation" (Sosa 2).

This barrier of expectation is perceived when parents feel themselves judged by their occupation, economic status, or social class. Oftentimes schools expect a certain level of participation of all parents and that parents should participate even if they are newcomers. Sosa reminds the school that there are real issues that keep parents from school; she believes it is the school's responsibility "to ascertain what the issue is or recognize that our concern is legitimate." Parents also sense that the school is distancing itself from them when personnel use "educational jargon" for communicating (106). Attitudinal barriers include uncertain roles, anxiety about how

they are being perceived, and dissatisfaction with their own home involvement and communication problems (105).

Two Worlds

Learning about different world-views is another way that we can understand ourselves and others. In her work with Latino families, Peña insists that she has learned to understand the importance of different world-views that may impact how people communicate with professionals as well as their children. Peña maintains that these worldviews shape expectations. Greenfield's collectivism-individualism model provides a framework that will enable us to comprehend our own perspective and that of the individual families we serve (1-2). Those with an individualistic perspective will value competition and focus on individual achievements, while those with a collectivistic perspective will place a higher premium on interdependence and community, prioritizing the goals of the group over those of the individual. Those who lean toward individualism may have more self-esteem, enjoy task orientation, and value cognitive intelligence; those who lean toward collectivism enjoy the family, social orientation and value social intelligence. In general, mainstream Euro-Americans tend to fall on the individualistic side, while Latinos (or Hispanics) typically tend toward a collectivistic outlook. In the end, Peña warns that there will be conflicts between these outlooks, and one must balance these competing worldviews in part by assimilating and in part by remaining true to one's heritage.

Respect/Respeto And Education/Educación

The term Latino (also referred to as Hispanic) represents a large and diverse group of individuals who are influenced by their own country of origin, language of preference, and region where they live. The population is made up of more than twenty cultural backgrounds. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2008, the Latino population is estimated to reach one

quarter of the U.S. population by 2050. It is also estimated that there are currently over fifteen-million Latino children (Peña 1). Latinos are largely respectful of authority, for self and for others and consider respect/respeto as a goal for their family. In this way they will live in “harmonious interpersonal relationships.” In Latino cultures, by the age of four, children are taught the verbal and non-verbal rules of respect such as greeting politely, not challenging an elder’s point of view, and not interrupting conversations between adults (Halgunseth, Ispa, and Rody 1286) Latinos respect authority and often use formal language when meeting individuals that they don’t know well by using titles as Señora or Señor and in English Mr. and Mrs. In general Latinos prefer to be called by their last names rather than their first name and they would like it to be reciprocal. At a school event a Latina would prefer to call an acquaintance Mrs. Smith to show respect. Some Latinos greet friends and family with a kiss on the cheek, but a handshake is considered respectful for others.

The Latino adults of the family respect the teachers of their children and believe that teachers are competent and therefore should not need any help from the parents. They respected their teachers in their own country and want to do the same now in North America. This is why Latinos consider it disrespectful if they interfere in their children’s education. They want to trust the ability of the teachers by not asking questions. Some are worried they might do harm by helping with homework and doing it incorrectly. Latinos believe that the school should take care of the academic education while they, the family, pay very close attention to the education or behavior within the home. There is another term in Spanish that is spelled educación but is more comprehensive in Spanish than in English. According to Halgunseth, Ispa, and Rody another Latino childrearing goal is educación and it means “training in responsibility, morality, interpersonal relationships,” according to the Mexican immigrant mothers. This broader sense of

educación connotes “educated children,” encompassing good manners, high morals, politeness, responsibility and respectfulness (1286).

Family

Thus Family/Familismo is very important within Latino cultures. There is a goal to maintain strong family ties, with an expectation that the family is the main source of emotional support (Halgunseth, Ispa, and Rody 1287). It is easy to notice that Latinos tend to have higher family cohesion than Euro-Americans. Latino parents teach respect to their family, and yet respect may be a barrier for some parents getting involved in their children’s education. They are enthusiastic about their child’s broader educación which includes being respectful to elders but also expect their children to take care of siblings, which may lead a student to miss an after-school math help time.

Unfortunately, getting parents and family involved in educational activities has not been a priority for Latinos. Families believed that schools see parents as agents of service for the school, rather than equal partners working together for the children (Sosa 103). However, Peña argues that, “increasing parental involvement is crucial for Latino student success.” Quezada insists that parental involvement does increase achievement for Latinos, but many barriers need to be overcome. Some of the typical barriers are the following: (1) inability to understand English; (2) viewing involvement in homework is interfering and disrespectful; (3) unfamiliarity with the school system; (4) lack of education, (5) negative experiences with school and negative experience with personnel; (6) too many responsibilities, and (7) lack of transportation or childcare.

It is difficult to connect with their schools and their children’s teachers. Many immigrants who are unable to communicate well in English have a sense of little self-worth. When they

cannot read school forms for lack of literacy, they are embarrassed. They have a high respect for teachers in general and believe that teachers don't need any help. These barriers make it difficult for teachers and parents to work together; it may be an inability to interpret cultures different than our own. The question is not what new and creative programs can be planned for parents. The question is how parents can be persuaded to come and participate. There must not only be more research, but also the right questions should be asked. Hoover-Dempsey et al. are on the right track when they argue that there is need for research to better understand, "what will motivate families, what will be the content of involvement, and what will be the outcomes so that parents who are minorities culturally and linguistically will desire to become interactive with their children's school" (195). There must be more research, and the right questions should be asked—not what new and creative programs can be planned for parents, but how parents can be persuaded to come and participate at all.

POSITIVE PARTNERS

Research indicates that higher academic achievement results when parents or family members become involved in students' education. Quezada points out that parental involvement produces various positive outcomes for the whole family, such as improved behavior and attitudes toward school, positive parent-child relationship, improved parental involvement, self-confidence and expertise, increased language achievement, and students' cognitive growth (32). These are significant factors for Latino families. The school's role is to identify which barriers their parents need help in overcoming and then to develop programs that will help address those barriers. Research has also shown that Latino parents do respond to other more personal strategies that make parents feel more comfortable, such as holding an informal coffee hour, gathering before school, or inviting them to have lunch in the cafeteria so that parents can eat with the teacher and students together. One teacher meets with parents after school in the schoolyard, sometimes he calls on the phone, and other times he makes home visits. Other possible strategies for teachers and family include the following offering parents flexible schedules, offering transportation or child care, providing hands on training, sending home information in English and Spanish to parents for input regarding trainings, conducting meetings in Spanish and English for parents, meeting with parents off school grounds for a social event, and in general making parents feel comfortable (33).

According to Peña, Latino parents are interested in their child's education but often find the language barrier an obstacle to assisting with homework and participating in school events and meetings. Peña has compiled several successful strategies for increasing parental involvement with Latino students (2-3):

- Creating a warm, caring, inviting, and receptive school environment. Providing personal and verbal contact, in person or through phone calls, helps to include parents who may have limited literacy skills.
 - Making home visits. Many parents view home visits as an extension of courtesy on the part of the school. Home visits also help to facilitate parental input.
 - Using parent liaisons or parent coordinators to create communication pathways and to help with cultural and language barriers.
 - Developing meeting notes. Notes should be taken during meetings, especially those where decisions are made regarding individual students.
 - Scheduling regular activities, events, and workshops that are based on the interests of parents. Providing transportation and childcare to events may also increase attendance.
 - Training teachers and staff about Latino cultures, as well as rudimentary Spanish language training for teachers, to facilitate communication. Providing ESL training and GED classes for parents may also be beneficial.
 - Maintaining positive assumptions that parents want to be involved and encouraging ongoing positive involvement.
 - Developing culturally relevant literature and materials that promote community or family reliance.
 - Attempting to establish contact with community leaders in order to build trust.
 - Using bilingual services for all communications, including phone calls and meetings.
- Connecting with parents is critical to supporting relationships.

STARTING INVOLVEMENT WHEN THEY ARE SMALL

In the next section I will present several researched-based programs and strategies, which will demonstrate teachers and families working together to improve their children's education. The range of parental involvement includes accepting prenatal and other health-care information, learning to enrich their toddler's talk in order to build vocabulary during story time, doing fun homework with their children, and teaching parents to help their children.

Carpinteria, CA Is Growing Positive

One place where there is a growing successful research-based program is Carpinteria, CA. One of the schools in the Carpinteria School District closed in 2007. While it was empty for a year people, started thinking of possibilities for its use. In the beginning a family tried but failed in building a literacy program and instead, after several more bids, Michelle Robertson, previously a school- teacher, became the Executive Director and opened the Carpinteria Children's Project at Main (CCPM) in 2009. Carpinteria is an ideal place in Santa Barbara County to pilot this project. The size of the community, with its five elementary schools, is appropriate and necessary resources are available. The community is large enough to include community life through schools, churches, business, etc., yet it is small enough to allow for programs and services to reach every willing community and family member.

After much strategic planning in 2010, the CCPM was ready to implement a School Readiness Plan for the children of the Carpinteria School District. The Project seeks to address the readiness gap for disadvantaged children and pave the way for their success beginning with healthy births to formalized preschool to ready-to-learn kindergarten and reading in elementary school. To do this, Robertson argues that a strong *early childhood program* (preschool) must be developed before the child enters public school. During the preschool years from three- to five-

year old children need to gain skills and competencies—singing songs; having conversations at school and at home; beginning to recognize colors, shapes, and the alphabet—which will lead to school success in kindergarten and beyond (1). But parents don't seem to have time to help in the classroom; or parents feel they don't know how to help, and others don't speak English fluently and are hesitant to become involved. The Project's goal touches every aspect of Carpinteria and already has targeted needs and is involved with families with intervention for academic improvement, childcare with classroom activities, and computer programs with readiness skills specifically for ELLs.

Robertson insists that a quiet crisis had been threatening the future of many children in the Carpinteria community—one that threatened their potential to succeed and failed to fulfill the promise of their educational system, a crisis that she refers to as the *readiness gap*. She realized that students who do not become proficient in language and math by third grade would likely have problems in further schooling. In answer to the crisis, Robertson developed a strong early childhood program while partnering with community members from business, faith-based organizations, schools, government, and individuals who provided valuable needed services for the CCPM. The community partnerships between social services, education, and the private sector have formed a powerful collaborative to address the readiness gap and helped reach the Project's goal of making sure that “all children entering kindergarten are now school-ready and succeeding by the end of third grade” (Robertson 1).

In the past this community has had unsafe neighborhoods and unsafe homes. However, through the CCPM programs, families are now learning to be protective in the community and in the home. As such, the Carpinteria collaborative has selected its strategies based on a shared theory of change. Its members share these beliefs and they make them their priorities:

- If children are physically and emotionally healthy from birth, they will thrive.
- If children have access to high quality early learning environments during the years prior to kindergarten the stage is set for life-long learning.
- If families and communities consider themselves partners with schools in these efforts, neighborhoods are safe, welcoming, and economically stable for children, thus allowing education to be a priority.

The CCPM knows it is impossible to address every social problem facing every child and family in the town of Carpinteria. This is why it is a collaborative community sharing a network of services that build pathways of care for families. When a need is targeted by the Project, there is a planning phase to establish a new service to meet the need. Some teachers and families are now much more involved with each other through shared activities, states Robertson. The Project's goal to address the readiness gap touches virtually every aspect of the Carpinteria community, and does so across all generations. Over time, Robertson expects the Project will create a successful, replicable model for others (3).

However, significant readiness gaps remain affecting those children in the Carpinteria community who enter kindergarten unprepared for success, according to Robertson. These needy children are most often from ethnic backgrounds and low socioeconomic groups and many need interventions for special education or for English language learners (53% of elementary school children and 38% of kindergarteners are ELL) (3). Robertson cites a different study by Hart and Risley that followed children from birth through the elementary grades and found that children from professional families accumulated experience with nearly forty-five million words, while those from the poorest families experienced only thirteen million—a thirty million-word gap. The readiness gap appeared as early as three years of age, when language development peaks,

and later resulted in problems in school, deficient employment readiness, and lessened economic stability (Hart and Risley1-2, Robertson 3-20).

Three years ago in 2009, I traveled from Colorado and met Robertson in California. I had been reading articles about parental involvement and one of the articles was about the small town of Carpinteria. I was able to meet with Robertson then and the following two summers as well and therefore, was interested to see the first published measured results of Robertson's study and those in conjunction with the UC Santa Barbara Gevirtz School of Education and First 5 Santa Barbara.

The Kindergarten Student Entrance Profile (KSEP) is an important tool for Kindergarten and now for preschoolers. The KSEP explains that the kindergarten children failed but had doubled their score. The CCMP Baseline for kindergarten in 2010 showed that 15% of students were failing; and in 2011 showed 13% and still failing. But in 2012 the kindergarten children were exposed to the instruction of KSEP, which teaches the basics, and the children doubled their score to 34%. They had failed but showed growth, hope, and demonstrated the effectiveness of the new tool. It is used to teach basic information to kindergarten students and has sections including a consistent content with the essential school readiness indicators. It provides basic information such as alphabet, numbers, colors, shapes, sounds, simple word recognition, and preparation for readiness testing. Additionally, it includes sections for physical and health readiness, social-emotional readiness, and school-ready knowledge. The kindergarten students who were failing may have had preschool teachers who believed that children learn by simply playing (i.e. going to activity centers and doing art, etc.). The kindergarten students who doubled their score from 2011 to 2012 and the students that had high scores may have had different teachers who taught using KSEP tools. Robertson caught what was missing when she saw the

low results from her kindergarteners, and now her preschool teachers know to teach the importance of readiness using KSEP. Robertson hopes that parents will also teach the basic KSEP at home. (Quirk, M. et al. 2)

Results for the second and third grade for Language were approximately the same: Language was 50% proficient (C) and also 50% non-proficient with little or no progress. Second and third grade scores were higher in Math than Language. But second grade scores went down from 71% to 65% (non proficient), while third grade scores came in at 78% (proficient). More testing is to take place in spring 2012.

Several additional benefits have resulted from the implementation of KSEP in Carpinteria. Besides teaching essential school readiness, KSEP also stresses good health and social-emotional readiness. A significant increase in Children's Body Mass Index (BMI) scores showed that children are healthier. There are indications that families are more actively engaged with their children's education: reading with their children, praising them, helping them with homework. This is an excellent outcome for the development of strong families.

As needs have been uncovered, plans have been instituted to facilitate involvement. For instance, parents are encouraged to ask teachers questions about their child when picking them up from CCPM. This will enable parents to become more comfortable later sharing with teachers at the elementary school. And, some of CCPM's services offering childcare also offer a place where parents can meet and have social support. The Early Learning and Literacy Lab, for example, targets preschool children that are *not* enrolled in a formalized preschool but can benefit from getting childcare with some developmental programming.

Another benefit is that there are now plenty of tutors to help children needing extra support with behavior or academics to meet their grade level proficiency. In addition, there is a

program specifically for ELLs, the Waterford Computer Program, which uses a software program to engage students in 20-minute sessions. The program is sequential and students receive a printout indicating their progress in literacy skills and English Language acquisition.

Finally, there is a program for families called AVANCE targeting preschool age children through toy making and home visitations. This program lasting 9-months stresses school readiness knowledge and social/emotional skills. AVANCE is just one of several programs available to help families develop protective factors including resiliency, social support, nurturing, and attachment. Robertson believes that through the collaborative system the created links of services will yield a pathway of care for families. In the same manner, Robertson and others believe that the earlier a child is touched by a comprehensive system of care, the more likely the child will develop into and remain a successful student (Robertson 4).

Young Children Learning at Home

The editors Dickinson and Tabors of *Beginning Literacy with Language* believe that if children have opportunities to spend several years in preschool they will likely have well-developed literacy. Parents and early childhood educators want children to become good readers and writers. However, many parents do not know how important it is to talk to their children when they are very young—in preschool, in kindergarten, and through the third grade. The team who wrote this book partners with the families and continues to learn more from children, with the hope that families and children will continue to grow in their knowledge during the three-year project. Their goal is not just to get children speaking early, but Snow, Dickenson, and Tabor insist that for children to have good literacy in the third and fourth grade, they must be speaking with *extended conversations* in preschool (3).

The editors and nine other authors collaborated to write this significant book. I will begin first with an introduction and an explanation of their interesting history of the Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development. I will then explain the new interest that has developed from a different study. Finally, I will present three varieties of conversation to enable young children to increase their vocabulary and to develop robust discourse. A research project provided the data for this book, and led by Dickinson, the Senior Scientist, the authors have worked on it since 1987 as a collaborative team, composed of members from Harvard, Tufts, Clark, and the Education Development Center in Massachusetts. Researchers collected material in homes and preschools, as well as from elementary schools, high schools, and lastly from low-income families starting with 3-year olds. In presenting their findings from this research the authors brought the findings to life by presenting various types of language that they had audiotaped. As mentioned, the Home-School Study focused on young children's literacy development and how children became readers and writers (Dickinson ix).

When the researchers began the study, there was much interest in socioeconomic differences in regard to children's achievement. Generally, it was suggested that middle class children had more opportunities to learn letters and sounds, to handle books, and write notes. While researchers pointed out the robust relationship between reading achievement and vocabulary, at that time little work had been focused on how children develop large vocabularies. In the meantime, Snow, Tabors, and Dickinson let it be known that they were interested in a different aspect of language skill. They explored children's experiences with language imitating some of the demands of literacy, that is, *talk*. There is talk that asks for a participant to develop understandings beyond the here and now and that asks for several utterances such as explanations, narratives, or imaginary. Snow et al. refer to this type of talk as extended discourse.

One goal of this project was to discover opportunities that develop extended discourse skills (2). The authors agreed that there is a link between children's early language skills and later being able to read effectively. This need provides an example of the necessity for teachers and parents to help each other. Teachers give parents suggestions of how to talk with their children and with their children's preschool teacher. Hopefully, such suggestions will result in parents talking about stories or what happened last night—using non-immediate talk at home. In this way children learn to carry on extended talking in the home and with the involvement of formalized preschool learning. Preschool teachers will encourage this by asking parents to have extended talk amongst themselves and with friends. And, it is important for parents to talk in this way at home, for at the young age of three- to five-years, parents' support of children's extended discourse is essential. Their research also indicated that differences in early achievement are linked to parental income levels, suggesting that families vary in how effectively parents support their children by talking (extended discourse) with them every day (Snow et al. 3).

Parents participating in the Home-School Study were chosen only if they could speak English at home, though one mother worried about her slightly less than perfect English, concerned that it might have affected her son. Home visits were conducted once each year for a three-year period, starting when children were three years old and ending when they were five years old. The home visitors brought along a few books and toys, and tape-recorded interactions between mothers and their children. Researchers concluded, once again, that the key to effectiveness is having families do whatever they do by doing it well during a child's early years (Snow et al. 6).

According to Bredekamp, Research Director of the Home-School Study, different kinds of experiences contribute to different aspects of children's language learning. All are important,

whether conversation during reading, pretend play, or at mealtime. The book also draws a second connection that is essential for the healthy development of preschool children—the link between home and school. DeTemple points out that reading with children, through a variety of ways, yields several benefits linked to early literacy and general school success. According to Sénéchal, her storybook exposure study, which promoted parents and children reading together for five years, resulted in the development of increased reading comprehension, fluency, spelling, and high scores for *reading for pleasure* (59). Walsh and Blewitt's study of children's novel word comprehension showed that comprehension increased through the use of all types of questions, suggesting that discussions between adult and child are indeed important (273). DeTemple maintains that it is important for the sharing of a reader and a child to experience being jointly focused on one text or one illustration. Then possibilities are presented for the child to use complex, extended language, such as explanations, definitions and descriptions, as well as past experiences, predictions, and inferences (35).

The DeTemple also suggests that children can gain “immediate talk” (i.e. here and now questions like “Where is the egg?” and “How many strawberries are there?”) However, the author adds that another more complex type of talk is non-immediate, in which the child can talk about related experiences and general questions aside from the immediate story. An example of non-immediate talk might be as follows: a mother and child read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* together in the afternoon, and the dad may come home in the evening ask the child, “What happened to *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* today?” and the child may answer, “He got sick!” This is an example of a non-immediate response. DeTemple explains that such responses are due to the fact that non-immediate talk refers to information that is not immediately visible in an illustration, typically involves longer utterances, and is more explicit, complex language rather

than a yes or no question. In contrast “here and now” conversation or immediate talk is closely tied to nearby pictures or words in a book. Non-immediate talk comes from personal memories, questions about knowledge, or making predictions. Book reading with children can be a wonderful experience with interesting illustrations and interaction from the reader, or made up stories that are here and now. When a story is read with interactions (or interruptions) during book reading while the story is growing the child will develop language skills. The more any type of talk is used, whether explanations, narratives, or pretend, the more likely that the child will be prepared for literacy challenges (DeTemple 28).

Katz argues that for preschoolers to develop the robust language of play, which leads eventually to literacy challenges, they must first develop skills in pretending from early, enjoyable experiences, including engaging in pretend play with adults. According to the research, Katz explains that within pretend play there is interpersonal engagement, language, and play. The author explains that when young children play there can be interaction with or without talk. The language sphere includes intentional communication, verbal or gestural, while play can take place through a variety of children’s pretend play, such as skipping, playing tag, inventing funny words, building a block tower, or pretending to be a firefighter—with or without a friend. When playing alone children may draw, dig, sort, use everyday objects as toys, or role play. Katz agrees that there is pretend play that does not require another person or language, but in social play the motivation and reward is the experience itself, such as a mother and daughter having a tea party or playing together with toys brought by a home visitor. Pretend play carries other important emotional and social benefits. Children can learn to communicate in playing out pretend scenarios and can manage inner conflicts. Even while a toddler is playing, he can talk about what he is doing or describe his activities. This kind of play can strengthen his ability to

put actions into words. A child may lead the show, but a question from an adult will encourage the child's narrating. For example, Dad might say, "Would you like to fly to the moon with me?" The author agrees that language is fundamentally part of the process of learning and engaging in social play (Katz 53).

Family members getting together, such as at mealtime, provides a good time to talk (75). Beals explains that there is a link between family conversations around the table and preschooler's later language and literacy. For instance, he argues that this is a time in which people "engage in a social interaction." There may be a special power that takes over the family at mealtimes, and Beals insists that mealtimes can play an important role in the development of children's language and literacy. Many U.S. families still strive to gather around the table at mealtime and in doing so they often work out relationships, tell stories of family members, and learn manners and social behavior (Beals).

One of the Home-School Studies was taped during a mealtime conversation. Todd had heard his friend talk about monsters, and he brought this up at the table. His mother spent some time convincing the three-year old Todd that monsters are not real. Beals points out that there are several possibly unfamiliar words that Todd could have picked up or that may have already been in his vocabulary. Before he was comforted Todd had given several long explanations about finding the monster—"If I see a *whole bunch*, um, I would wake up... and they will still be there." His mother explained that monsters are *make-believe* and *somebody with a wonderful imagination* only makes up monsters. The mother also helped comfort Todd by making a connection to a family experience when they had watched Michael Jackson's "*Thriller*." The mother explained, "they show [Jackson] putting his make-up on for *Thriller*." Todd had also been comforted earlier when the mother told Todd she would "never let any monsters get you."

Throughout this conversation, Todd was able to hear and understand new words.

Narrative conversations, often at mealtimes, provide preschoolers with a time to learn words—from listening, watching, and participating in a variety of ways. During such times children gather receptive vocabulary by listening to discussions of new topics. Beals gives an example: a family was joking about their five-year old daughter, telling her that she would soon be able to go to the store on her own to get groceries. While she giggled, her father was figuring out how many years she would need to wait before she could get a driver’s license. This kind of talk is about future plans, a form of narrative talk which children need to experience before going to school and doing homework (82).

Narratives are one more type of extended discourse that provides information about an event. In another Home-School Study, children were encouraged to talk to their families about special events at school, including a class visit to the local Fire Station. At mealtime four-year old Casey explained about the firefighters. He told his parents, “The fire guys, the firefighters, um, they have walkie-talkies so they can tell where they are.” Mealtimes, or any time together with family members, can provide excellent opportunities for extended conversations, which is a strong predictor of literacy and development (Beals).

Toward the end of the book, Tabors and Dickinson introduced, “Bringing Homes and Schools Together,” They are passionate about research on children’s growth in literacy and language; they care about the families that they wrote about, and the teachers that they wrote with and worked with. Finally, the editors wrote two more chapters concerning parent involvement, in which they wisely point out the need for all parties to work together for children. I agree with Tabors and Dickinson that educators can make relationships and understand their students as they provide parents with information and support to help them raise their children.

Collaborative Storybook Remedial Program for Kindergarten

Smetana insists that her students lack early literacy skills because they have not had opportunities to listen, talk about stories, or engage in word play, or read with family members (cited in Dickinson and Tabors 1). Neither children nor adults have been exposed to literacy modeled in the home. Smetana argues that Collaborative Storybook reading, a unique remedial program, is an effective solution for the challenge of twenty-seven underprepared kindergarteners at risk. The author reminds us that the quest to involve parents in their child's education has taken many forms. In this case it took the form of helping out in the kindergarten classroom. Research shows that when parents are involved in their children's education, student achievement improves.

Smetana claims that many students, young or adult, lack early literacy skills including knowledge of print, story grammar, or the alphabet letters. Parents, who are from diverse cultures and speak languages other than English, are often not encouraged by their backgrounds to get involved in the school. These parents have been invited to school meetings, school activities, and parent-school councils, yet they did not get involved. Only when a small group of parents were asked (probably by the kindergarten teachers) to assist their own children to "master academic concepts" and prepare them for school. With a shortage of time and resources, teachers planned a program that is carried out by trained parent volunteers, twenty or thirty minutes each day with a small group of students (Smetana).

The teachers were determined to train the parents to be able to deliver instruction to the pre-kindergarteners who wanted to read. Parents were given interactive training, opportunities for conversations, and a chance to listen to the adult reader and discuss the reading. With this training parents were able to carry out a 'picture walk' and 'picture talk' and they could retell

characters, setting, problem, goal, events, and solutions. In short, they acquired the skills and confidence to assist. However, by the end of the first period their children did not meet the kindergarten benchmarks. Many did not master their letter names or sounds and could not identify the parts of a book, the purpose of print, and most did not choose to visit the book corner. Smetana was shocked that out of 27 kindergarteners most could not name a book or retell a story.

More volunteers were recruited from kindergarten classrooms and the larger school community. They wanted to help, but they also wanted to learn about children's literature and how a child learns to read. Even parents in the community could now develop and strengthen their skills as they learned how to question, clarify, and engage the listener in the storybook. As a result, parents were also provided with a place to discuss what they were learning. Smetana insists that the key to involving parents is creating an environment in which parental contribution is valued. Research confirms this, showing that when parents are involved in their children's education the children's skills improve (290-296). Though most parents in the study agreed with this finding, unfortunately some children have yet to invite their family to get involved.

Parental Involvement in Homework with TIPS

Homework time, especially when parents are invited to act as an the audience, can develop into a form of literacy development at home. At other times, homework for children and parents working together can be negative, confusing, or frustrating as a home-based learning time. Nevertheless, it is also a point of parent and teacher involvement and, therefore, a point of communication between home and school. Researchers Hoover-Dempsey et al. point out that homework can be a "powerful tool to let parents know what the child is learning" (195).

It also gives parent and child an opportunity to interact and an opportunity for the teacher to communicate with the home. Van Voorhis has taken math and science homework a step further in the field of Parent Involvement. He has conceptualized and researched a framework called TIPS: Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork. With TIPS teachers and parents have received a key to better homework time, as TIPS is a well thought-out Motivational Model. Along with the typical homework comes a “fun” activity that is designed for student and parent to interact as partners. This fun homework comes last and the students’ and parents’ efforts are both graded (205).

One type of TIPS homework that is popular with elementary students is a parent-child homework program based on a theoretical framework to use poetry to drive literacy. Younger children especially like TIPS for reading and writing. For this activity a teacher sends home a writing assignment for both parent and student.

Barillas, an author-teacher, claims that teachers in the U.S. believe that immigrant parents cannot help with children’s homework. These teachers perceive that a person’s inability to speak English is a barrier. Barillas gives children and parents the choice to write in their first or second language, and she sends home assignments in English and Spanish. Children brought back many stories and poems every week. Because this teacher allowed writing in one’s primary language, parents could help their children. Both parents and children wrote and they responded to each other. When this occurs, parents know that they can make a contribution through their experiences (303-307).

Using TIPS homework is one way to encourage interacting with the school or teacher. Epstein and Van Voorhis claim that the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) program engages the student in sharing homework tasks with a parent. Parents are asked to be

interested and responsive but are not asked to teach special skills. TIPS makes students responsible for homework, while parents become their audience. TIPS activities appear very helpful in encouraging students to recognize that teachers want their families to know what their children are learning, they want parents to participate in the process, and they want students to own primary responsibility for learning outcomes (181).

What is the purpose of homework? Epstein and Van Voorhis revealed a list of at least nine reasons for homework. At first I will give a definition of homework and then the nine purposes of homework. Homework is to increase learning and development, develop home-school-community partnerships and improve teaching's role in the homework process. These authors are big fans of TIPS; in fact Epstein and Van Voorhis created the comprehensive review of research on homework and started TIPS, explaining the purposes of homework for parents and young children. TIPS is another way students, teachers, and parents can help each other and be connected.

Below Epstein and Van Voorhis give the readers nine reasons for homework:

- Practice is useful for repeating skills, such as writing letters and numbers; increasing speed gradually, especially learning to write words. Teachers report that the main reason they assign homework in elementary grades is to give students time to practice skills.
- Helping students who have difficulty finishing their work in the classroom prepare for the next lesson. These students need to focus and learn to finish that day or the next.
- Participation means that students may increase the amount that a student gets involved in applying special skills, knowledge, or projects, and also engage in active learning in the classroom.

- Personal development builds student responsibility, time management, self-confidence and feelings of accomplishment. One needs to recognize student's talents or special skills, as well.
- Parent-child relations are designed to guide and promote positive communications between parent and child. Parent and child conversations may help reinforce the importance of homework and learning.
- Communications may be purposely designed to enable teachers to inform and involve all families in their children's curriculum activities. Teachers may organize assignments to keep families aware of topics taught in class.
- Some homework may be designed for peer interactions, to encourage students to work together, thereby motivating one another and learning from each other. Not only could they strengthen each other's ability on their homework, but also they can build new friendships.

Helping Teachers Reach Out To Parents

In the same way teachers and parents motivate one another and learn from each other when working together on the same child's behalf; once they learn how to do so, the teacher and parent build a relationship. Many classroom teachers across the United States feel unprepared to work with students and families who speak limited English or no English. They know that schools are accountable for the achievement results for students, and both teachers and administrators continue to search for new strategies that will help ELLs to acquire English and be able to understand the content material, like math, reading, or science. For this reason authors Chen, Kyle, and McIntyre describe a professional development project designed to teach K-12

educators to make efficient strategies for the learning of English language learners (ELL). The authors share the results as the teachers placed a greater emphasis on family involvement practices. The Sheltered Instruction and Family Involvement (SIFI) project introduced the teachers to research on the effects of family involvement. Chen, Kyle, and McIntyre argue the importance of training teachers for ELLs and specifically for teachers to be able to reach out to parents of diverse languages and cultures (7).

The authors provided assistance to a group of elementary, middle school, and high school teachers over eighteen months who were learning strategies to help the ELL population of students. The authors noted that ELLs have continued to lag significantly behind their peers and reasoned that teachers are unprepared to teach ELLs effectively. Compounding the problem, assessment standards have increased and No Child Left Behind demands that these students achieve as their peers (Chen et al). This expectation heightens the critical need for teachers to know how to provide instruction for this population (8).

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is a means for making grade-level academic content accessible to ELLs, while at the same time promoting language and literacy. For example, if the content to be taught regards addition, the teacher will model how to add items. But before beginning, math students will study a list of vocabulary words such as cookies, dishes, pencils, mother, brother, and sister. In this way students can learn both content and vocabulary, as well as story problems. SIOP includes eight important tools to help English Limited students: preparation, building, background, comprehension, input, strategies, interaction, and practice (Echevarria, Vogt, Short 9).

Family Involvement requires reaching out to the parents of the teacher's students, and teachers should try to understand the family with a positive communication for the good of the

student's achievement. I agree with Chen et al. based on my own experiences as an ESL instructor for fifteen years, serving both adults and children. During this time I have successfully communicated with parents through home visits or meetings at school by being sensitive to the cultural differences I may have with the families I meet. Chen et al. add that teachers, by attempting to reflect on their own heritage, traditions, and biases, will be better able to understand others. Communication and listening skills are helpful also, and it is very important to consider our attitudes before getting involved with parents, especially if one does not understand their cultural background.

Teachers involved in one cohort had opportunities to read and discuss information about family visits to support student learning, and academic achievement. As such, teachers made action plans and strategies for involving and learning from families. In total, all participants worked together learning new effective strategies, planned appropriate lessons and engaged in reflective dialogue about how to best meet the needs of ELL students. They found their eighteen-month professional development beneficial in their growth as teachers of ELLs. These are classroom teachers, trained to better assist their ELL students. As one teacher called out, "I'll be a better teacher next week!"

The following section discusses changes in Teacher's Cohort 1. At the beginning of the project most of the teachers understood family involvement in traditional ways such as parent conferences and report cards. Teachers would be encouraged if most of parents participated in conferences. During these conferences, however, only 25% of all teachers tried to make a phone call to their student's home, although of the phone calls made seventeen of twenty were mostly positive. Further, few teachers (I don't know how far they were along in the school year) attempted to get to know students through their families, with fifteen of twenty teachers

pointing-out that they had “asked parents to share positive information about their child,” but again only 25% had tried to call home. And, only three of twenty teachers reported making instructional connections while trying to learn more about their students and their families through interchange with parents. Almost half of the eighteen teachers made positive phone calls to over 50% of their students, and seven teachers, about 75% of those participating, reported that they had asked parents to share information about their child.

One teacher wrote in her lesson, “In my lessons I make connections to the students about their background and cultural activities in order to align with core content... I created some lessons about families which made the students reflect and feel proud of their parents.”

The following section discusses changes in Teacher’s Cohort 2. Participants were generally not positive. In the beginning of the SIFI project they held positive views about the value of parent’s involvement and about parental roles in supporting their child’s academic development. Contrasting with others, 67% of the teachers, twelve of eighteen, agreed that, “Mostly when I contact parents it’s about trouble or problems.” In addition 33%, six of eighteen, of the teachers agreed that “teachers do not have time to involve parents in very useful ways.” But 94% of teachers, seventeen of eighteen, agreed or strongly agreed that “teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices.” The positive comments remained positive and one teacher changed from negative to positive by the end of the study. Instead of the majority of the teachers making contact with parents on the phone in order to discuss concerns about students, now the majority of teachers say they would contact parents “for a range of reasons, like a positive phone call to praise and to tell the parents the child is doing right.” The number of home visits by teachers increased from two to seven, and four of the teachers insisted that these visits were the most successful practice they could employ.

I agree with Chen et al. that the project challenged the view that many teachers hold toward parents living in poverty, with language differences, or low education and that teachers must learn how to see and build from families' strengths (Moll & Gonzalez 5). The project reflected research, which has shown the positive connection between parent involvement and students' academic success.

TWO CASE STUDIES AND THEIR RESULTS

Introduction

Many people are aware of the growing number of migrants and immigrants living in North America. Mostly, they come for a better life, and for their children. They come into North American schools from diverse cultures, traditions, and languages other than English. As such, they often struggle in this new country, not unlike a U.S. family might have difficulties after moving to a foreign country for work. In this case, children would attend a local school in their new country, and their parents would probably provide them with a tutor, or perhaps, they would send their children to a private English-speaking school. This is seldom an option for new immigrants moving to North America. Instead, immigrant children and their parents are likely to struggle with unfamiliar schools, while, at the same time, teachers and administrators may experience difficulties in meeting new people from other cultures. Though parents, teachers, and administrators all want immigrant children to gain an education and catch up with their peers, they may not be ready to develop working relationships, but we should remember that the U.S. is the hostess.

Problem

The case studies took place in Metro Denver and in a small community south of Colorado Springs, both in small elementary schools. The schools in these towns are generally comprised of middle class families, though some live in poverty. The school population includes high numbers of Euro-Americans and Latinos, as well as African-Americans, Asian-Pacifics and a small population of Native Americans. This population of immigrants is somewhat large for small schools with 230-350 students including preschool. Students represent a variety of cultures and languages but are mostly Latino (Hispanic). Some of the immigrant children are foreign-

born while many others were born in the U.S., yet almost all of these children, regardless of their place of birth, struggle with language and literacy.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) brings to our attention that there are five million students to provide for across our country needing help with their achievement in order to better reach educational goals. Many of these students receive special attention as either Limited English Proficient (LEP) or as an English Language Learner (ELL). However, the ELL students often need more academic support than teachers or governments are able to provide. In urban areas, because of NCLB, there may be more trained (ESL) English as a Second Language teachers to provide support. Most of the ELL students will be immersed in typical classrooms with instruction provided in English.

These students receive some support from an ESL teacher for 30-60 minutes, two or three days a week, when they are pulled out of their regular classrooms in a small group to be tutored as needed. During these short periods, the ESL teacher focuses on content areas, helping students understand their math or science studies, and students practice reading and writing to gain English skills. In some situations, the ESL teacher will “push-in,” which means that she will go into the classroom and quietly visit each ELL student, providing temporary support in their classrooms. Sheltered Instruction is another form of support for ELLs. This instruction is provided specifically in content areas where students need the most support in order to eventually transition into mainstream classrooms. Though students are taught in English, these teachers use simplified English and modified textbooks. Sheltered Instruction provides the most support to ELLs, but unfortunately, it is the form of support offered least often to schools.

Problems arise from the fact that students requiring ESL tutoring only receive support for a few hours two- or three days a week. A far more serious issue, however, is the fact that only a

very few classroom teachers have been trained to help ELLs in the way that ESL teachers are trained. Therefore, many ELLs find themselves struggling in mainstream classrooms throughout much of the day, and their regular classroom teachers, without receiving ESL training, have only a poor connection with the students and their parents. There is a lack of training for classroom teachers not only for academics, but also to know how to reach out to immigrant families. It is the responsibility of administrators to understand what immigrants need in order for the children in their schools to acquire English and to learn.

Obviously, communicating in English with students is important if they are to learn English. Teachers must talk to all of their students in English, even with those who are not yet fluent in English. It is also important, and often more difficult, for teachers and parents to communicate, whether or not the parent and teacher speak the same language. It is surprising in the communities studied how few people in the local schools and stores are bilingual. With Spanish speakers representing the largest growth in the population, schools confront a problem in that they often cannot find someone within the school to translate for a Spanish-speaking parent.

Method

This is what I did to gather information for my two case studies. First, I called on Mrs. Sanchez, a mother with four children, living in the small community south of Colorado Springs where I taught for several years. I have never met her husband, but their daughter tells me that her mother and dad pushed their children to graduate from high school; all three older children have graduated. I am an ESL teacher in the same district and would see their children on and off in school and provide assistance to them when they needed help. For that reason, I felt comfortable calling Mrs. Sanchez to ask for an interview. When I arrived at the Sanchez's home,

their eighteen-year old daughter answered the door, so her mom and I asked her to stay for the interview.

I met Jen and Annie, two mothers who are trying to learn English. I met them about a year ago at the CoTESOL Convention in Denver. I had presented on Parental Involvement, and I was excited to see another presentation at the convention on the same topic. This Panel presentation included a school principal, an ESL teacher, two ESL administrators (one from Denver and one from CDE), and parents Jen and Linda with their young children. I was thrilled to see that they wanted to tell us how they have been involved at their school, especially since they just started taking English classes a year ago. I asked to interview them and they agreed to meet me along with their children at their elementary school one evening. It turned out that they wanted to come on the same night as their English class night, therefore, Linda, the ESL teacher, rounded up all the children in her classroom quickly and she gave us a different room across the hall. In the end, Jen and Annie provided excellent information, and they missed very little of their English class.

In both interviews, I explained that I would be asking two general questions in order to help me learn more about your families. The two questions I attempted to answer through my case studies were: 1) “How important are interactions between teachers and parents?” and 2) “How much can we expect of parents?” I did elaborate and explain what I was looking for until I felt that they understood the questions.

Case Study: 1

I met Mrs. Sanchez eleven years ago, in 2000, when I started to teach ESL in an elementary school in a small town south of Colorado Springs. There were just five ESL teachers when I started. As the population of the district grew the number of ELL students increased.

There are now ten ESL teachers and two or three assistants for eleven school buildings, including one high school, two middle schools, and eight elementary schools. In the school where I started, there are now about 450 children including preschool. During this time, the community's old public library was also replaced with a new library with new books and computers. However, it remains the same friendly, small town community. When I started teaching in this school, three of Mrs. Sanchez's four children attended the school. Her youngest child was still a toddler. Jesus, the oldest son, did not receive ESL services. The second son, Jose, was served for special education, speech and ESL for a few years. Apparently Jose did not begin speaking until he was in kindergarten. But by the time he became one of my ESL students he was in the second grade, speaking broken English, but not in Spanish, though the rest of the family is bilingual. Although Jose's speech was difficult to understand, little by little his speaking and cognitive abilities improved with the help of the speech teacher, the special education teacher, and myself.

The first time I met Mrs. Sanchez she arrived for the last night of parent-teacher conferences. As a new teacher, I was a little concerned because colleagues had informed me that Mrs. Sanchez *could* speak English but *refused* to, and I realized my Spanish was intermediate, at best. During the conference, however, when I struggled to remember a word she gently filled in the gap, with her quiet but good English. Many who have a second language but are not proficient would understand that Mrs. Sanchez could speak English, but in the unfamiliar school environment she felt uncomfortable speaking her second language. My struggle to speak in her first language became an invitation for Mrs. Sanchez to do the same. After laughing together over our struggle to communicate that night, it became easier for us to discuss her children and their academics and behavior.

Jose was one of my first students, and he learned slowly. Mrs. Sanchez was very grateful for all the attention that Jose received. She told me that she attends several meetings each year, and even if there was no translation support, she listened carefully and would add a few words. Her daughter, Kathy, was in first grade and there were some concerns about her literacy, but not ESL. At the end of the school year, despite these concerns, she was moved on to the second grade. However, in the first week of the next year there was a discussion among teachers that led to her being moved back to the first grade. I don't believe Mrs. Sanchez was included in these initial discussions.

I discovered that at least one teacher thought that Kathy was not ready for the second grade. During my interview I asked Kathy if she remembered moving back to the first grade. She said she did remember being moved back to the previous classroom, but she did not understand what was happening at the time. Mrs. Sanchez did not remember at all. Kathy explained that her family was experiencing great difficulties during this time. In fact, her dad took his older sons to Mexico, and Mrs. Sanchez moved into her mother's house with her two young daughters while she tried to find work. Her youngest daughter, Anna, was in and out of half-day kindergarten, and her daughter, Kathy, began to get into trouble fighting with other girls. A year later the family got back together, and the three older children moved into the middle school, one by one.

I asked Mrs. Sanchez if she and her husband had been involved with their children in after school programs for homework help. Both Mrs. Sanchez and Kathy laughed and said that they never knew there was such a thing as homework help after school. Kathy remembered that if their parents could not help with homework then her older brother, Jesus, helped his younger siblings, and she insisted he did so all the way through high school. I remember a time while I was teaching at the elementary school when Jesus became tired of helping his younger brother.

But I knew that Latino children are expected to take care of each other, and I assume that Jesus continued to help. I also asked Mrs. Sanchez if she had ever been involved with school events or if she would go to the school to find out how her children were doing. With a big smile she said that she goes to almost all the conferences every year for all of her children. That is the only way that Mrs. Sanchez believes that she will learn about her children's progress.

When the older children were in middle school, Anna, the youngest, was slowly improving in her basic classes. Because she had missed a lot of school in kindergarten, she did struggle a little in first grade. Once again teachers were concerned and wanted Anna to repeat the second grade, even though she was already in ESL and receiving support. I learned that Mrs. Sanchez had told Anna's teachers, in her soft, but firm voice, "No, it did not help Kathy, and Anna will be fine." A year or two later, Anna and her mother decided that she should take the opportunity to move to a new school. Mrs. Sanchez believed that it was time for a change and to leave behind her previous "bad experiences." I had also been transferred to this new school, and I had Anna as my ESL student once again in the fourth grade, even though both Anna's classroom teacher and I knew that she no longer needed ESL support. This was confirmed at year-end, when her ELL final tests score showed that she was 'English fluent.'

Kathy had a hard time in middle school. She continued getting into fights, but she allowed me, on a few occasions, to help her study for tests. However, after Kathy got into trouble one night, the police became involved, and her punishment was that one of her parents had to come to school and sit with her in all her classes for most of one day. Mrs. Sanchez did not want to sit with Kathy all day, but if her mother did not come, Kathy would be in more trouble. When I asked Kathy about how the administrator had treated her during the day, she said that he was polite, but she remembered how embarrassed she was. Kathy thought, looking back, that it was a

good punishment. She thought she would never do anything like that again, and I think that was a turning point for her.

When Jesus, Jose, and Kathy were all in high school, the two boys often got into trouble, and in Mrs. Sanchez' words, "the school kicked the boys out of school." The administrators thought the boys possessed drugs, but she insisted they didn't and that they were not in a gang. But, the boys were expelled and given a choice to stay out of school or to attend an alternative school for expelled students. Of course, they went to the alternative school because Mrs. Sanchez wanted them to remain in school. After just six months the alternative school, teachers told Mrs. Sanchez that Jesus and Jose could no longer stay there because they were good students, worked well with others, and did not cause any trouble. The teachers told Mrs. Sanchez that her sons had a right to return to the high school, and they did because she wanted them to finish school and graduate. Eventually both boys did graduate, and Mrs. Sanchez told me that Jose had graduated out of special education when he was in the eleventh grade.

When I called Mrs. Sanchez, I told her that I admired her and her family and explained why I wanted to interview her. She remembered me from a few years ago. I told her that I was a grandmother now, and she immediately said she was too, so we told one another about our grandchildren for a few minutes. I found out that Kathy was now married and had moved out of the house, and Mrs. Sanchez was upset until she found out that Kathy was attending a different alternative school. Kathy's mother-in-law had found a special school that provides babysitting while young mothers go to school. Then Mrs. Sanchez discovered that Kathy was getting better grades and could finish high school early if she wanted to. Kathy explained that the school paired her with one teacher and allowed her to study online and learn at her own pace. In this manner

a teacher was always present to help her with homework, and all while others took care of her baby.

I asked Kathy about her experiences with the two different high schools and how they were similar or different. She responded that teachers at the regular school did not give her much attention or the academic assistance that she needed. And at the alternative school, the teachers seemed to care more according to Kathy. When I asked her about the difference in her grades, she answered quietly like her mother, saying that at the regular high school she received a B, C's, and a D, but at the alternative school she received A's and a B. And she did graduate early.

In another situation I discovered that in the new school Mrs. Sanchez and her daughter, Anna, were invited to take part in a parent and child assignment. In the fourth grade program each spring, the parents are asked to help children describe and explain their country. Mrs. Sanchez was invited to participate and given instructions on how to prepare for her part of the presentation. The fourth grade teacher asks all parents and children to do the following: research; present up to six items: foods, religion, music, clothing, celebrations, and/or or native language; and then create a family tree, write a report, and make a map and pictures. These were brought to school in order to present their heritage. Mrs. Sanchez reported that it made her feel very happy to tell about their country and share her Mexican food.

In summary, the Sanchez family feels self-sufficient, and the siblings are taught to take care of each other. For example, Jesus, the oldest, like it or not, is expected to help the younger children with any difficult homework. He is also responsible for driving younger children wherever they need to go. Mrs. Sanchez learned that she could be more involved in Anna's classroom projects. The older children who got into trouble were also involved with alternative

schools and teachers. These teachers seemed to be more positive and respectful to students as well as to the parents.

Case Study: 2

I met Jen and Annie about a year and a half ago at the CoTESOL Convention in Denver. I had presented there on Parental Involvement, and I was excited to see that there was another presentation scheduled on that topic. When I arrived at the panel presentation there was a school principal, an ESL teacher, two ESL administrators (one from Spring Institute and one from CDE), as well as Jen and Linda with their young children sitting quietly. I was thrilled to discover that they wanted to tell us how they have been involved at their school, even though they were not fluent English speakers and just beginning English classes. When Jen stood up she spoke a few good sentences in English about getting involved at the school and taking English classes, and then she asked for the remainder of her remarks to be translated. After Jen's speech, her friend, Annie, picked up her toddler and also spoke to the audience in Spanish. I was so impressed that afterwards I tried to greet Annie in Spanish, and we laughed. I left the convention hoping that I could see them again.

Linda, who teaches English Language Learner program, realized that the school needed an English class for adults four years ago. She believed English classes for adults would not only help them learn English more quickly but would also provide opportunities for non-fluent speaking adults to meet more people and become interested in the school and its activities. Linda arranged the English classes with the principal, and Linda found an English teacher and they started the classes—two evenings a week for 2 ½ hours each evening. A year and a half later, I called Linda and she helped to arrange for me to come to their elementary school in Denver

Metro. I looked forward to meeting Jen and Annie again, the two mothers who are friends, raising children and learning English together.

During our time together, I discovered that Jen and Annie, and their husbands, are becoming more involved at their school and that their children are benefitting from their involvement. Jen and her husband have twins in second grade and both Jerry and Andrea are in the English Learner program with their ESL teacher Ms. Linda. Their sixth grade daughter had advanced to the Leadership Academy, and previously had been in the English Learner program. Jen's husband is taking English classes; he is an active member of the community and regularly attends family nights. Annie and her husband have four children—two of their daughters graduated from high school, their fifth grade daughter Gabriela is in the English Learner program, and their preschooler Maria will go to kindergarten next year and possibly be enrolled in the English Learner class also. Annie's husband is also attending adult English classes, and he is participating in some school events and becoming more involved.

Last February in the evening, I arrived to meet with Jen and Annie at their school in Denver Metro to conduct the interview. I arrived early and noticed that the all of the walls in the small, tidy school of 230 children were covered with essays, art, and pictures with positive phrases. Linda gathered Jen and Annie's children to read and play while I interviewed their parents in another room. As I was seated with Jen and Annie and her toddler, Maria, I wondered how the interview would go. It soon became apparent, however, that their English skills and enthusiasm would carry us through. Though I addressed questions to Jen and Annie separately, they mostly answered together and in agreement with one another.

As I began the interview, Annie was holding her daughter Maria, rocking her to sleep. I knew that their children's teachers do not speak Spanish, and I wanted to ask Jen about that

question first: “Do you have trouble communicating with your children’s teachers?” Without hesitating, Jen and Annie responded together, “No. No problem.” They insisted that they have no problems because everyone in the school is very helpful. Jen explained that if they have a question—“big or small”—they go to Ms. Linda, who is fluent in English and Spanish. When I asked, “Who is helpful?” they explained that the secretary, the principal, and the teachers are all helpful, but mostly it is Ms. Linda who teaches all of the English Language learners in the school. I discovered that Linda also helps the parents and families of her students. Ms. Linda is the person that translates important communications into Spanish before sending them home with children. Jen and Annie said excitedly, “We get English and Spanish! We get both!” I think this is very helpful to them as they are learning English.

“The school principal is the leader of school activities, Jen tells me, including family nights, parades, and other events. For special family nights she thinks ahead and has information translated for families who don’t speak English fluently. If the principal wonders whether or not someone got the information, he also makes sure to call that person. “She calls us on the telephone!” Annie laughs and says, “They call us all the time.” I also learned that the principal started a garden area in the back of the school and gives money to the children who are interested in buying seeds for their garden. Apparently, Jen’s husband helped their young son Jerry to grow something in their garden patch last summer.

As the interview proceeded, I asked the question, “Is homework difficult for your children to read in their second language?” Once again, Annie explained that every time there is homework, the parents receive homework directions in Spanish, so that they can read and understand the directions and help their children. However, when the homework is finished it must be completed in English. I could see that families in this school were benefitting from

doing homework bilingually. For example, because Annie is strong in Mathematics but her daughter, Gabriella, is not, Annie can explain and teach the division in Spanish so that Gabriella can understand. Gabriella then was able to work out division problems successfully and come up with the correct answers in English. Gabriela can read pretty well in English, and she is helping her mother learn to read in English, too. So, Annie is learning English with her daughter, and Gabriella's math grade is improving! Annie told me that the teachers are very attentive, saying "If my daughter gets only half of the problems correct, the teacher will help her right away. And, if the teacher needs a Spanish-speaking person she will contact Ms. Linda right away."

I learned of another example regarding homework with Jen and her second grade son, Jerry. Though Jerry doesn't like to read because it is difficult, he is proud of his mother who is studying English. So Jerry often sits near his mother in order to try to read and do homework just like his mother. Then Jerry decided to read his mother's homework out loud to help her because he insists, "I know what the English words should sound like." As this has continued, both Jerry and his sister like to read together with Jen. As a result, Jerry's reading is much improved, and his reading scores are going up, much to the delight of Jen and her husband.

Jen related to me that she is unhappy about one thing. She told me that their school district was considering building a new high school. As a member of the PAC (Parents and Children—like a PTO) Jen was invited to a meeting to view a video about the possible new high school building. (Annie, who is also a member of the PAC but no longer has children of high school age, related to me that she does not have strong feelings one way or the other and chose not to view the video.) However, Jen told me that she was very happy to be part of this discussion, so that she could "listen and share her ideas." After seeing the video she was sad to see how modern this new school will be compared to their small cozy elementary school

building. Jen said, “I cannot imagine my children there. The library is very fancy—like a hotel.” On the other hand, she knew that her children had seen the video and were all excited. She expressed her feelings, “For me it does not look friendly or warm. I don’t agree, but I think it might be good to discuss and keep an open mind.”

Jen also related that she had another job to think about. Recently, Linda asked Jen if she would like to read to Kindergarteners one day a week in the morning. Jen said, “Yes!” Now she is reading to them and listening to what they say. She told me when she is not needed in Kindergarten she goes to the first grade. Jen takes a child and a chair out in the hall and reads and helps the child with letters or numbers. Once when Jen was tutoring a child, her son saw her in the hallway. He came over with his friend, and said, “That’s my mother, she is helping!”

Near the end of the interview I asked Jen and Annie, “What did you have to do to become a PAC member?” They answered that they did nothing—they had been invited by the principal who told them that teachers and administrators needed to hear their opinions. According to Jen and Annie, there is only one thing that this school needs. They shared that when someone needs a Spanish-speaking person who can speak, listen and understand, read, and write in good Spanish and English, there is only one person here to do many, many, things.

Results and Discussion

In my case studies I was trying to answer these two questions: 1) How important are the interactions between teachers and parents? and 2) How much can we (teachers) expect from the parents? The first case study, in which I interviewed Mrs. Sanchez, demonstrates that interactions between teachers and parents can be important for several reasons. First, I have realized that the most reliable form for parents and teachers to get together and discuss their children is the standard parent-teacher conference. Conferences are regularly scheduled, allowing

for both the teacher and parent, and even newcomers to this country, to know the exact day and time of the twenty- to thirty-minute meeting. During these conferences, which take place twice a year with the parent visiting one teacher at a time, the teacher and parent review the child's academic, and if necessary, behavior progress. This interaction provides good motivation for parents to want to attend their children's parent-teacher conferences.

Secondly, just as the parents are interested to hear about their children's progress, teachers are also eager to learn more about their family and background. Teachers may hear of a homework issue that the parents cannot solve, or perhaps a parent doesn't understand something about school and they need help with an explanation or translation. Teachers can improve the exchange of information and make their interaction with parents easier by giving them a list of the best ways and times to contact the teacher. For example, the teacher can let parents know how to reach them by phone, email, or for meetings at school in the afternoon, evening or on weekends. Providing this information enables the family to easily get in touch with their children's teacher.

A third, and important reason to facilitate parent-teacher interaction is for both parties to develop a common goal for a student. Too often children attend school year after year with no one taking the time to help them achieve their potential and expand their horizons. Parents and teachers might jointly develop a simple, short-term goal of raising a student's test scores in science. Better yet, parents and teachers might begin working together early in a child's education to prepare him or her for college.

My interview with Mrs. Sanchez demonstrated that interactions between teachers and Mrs. Sanchez during parent-teacher conferences provided the most useful way for all parties involved to exchange information about their children. It became clear to me, however, that the

success of these conferences depended upon the respect that parents and teachers had for one another. The case study, in which I interviewed Mrs. Sanchez, illustrated how she grew in her understanding of the importance of parental involvement and mutual respect. Mrs. Sanchez experienced a lack of respect, for example, when her daughter Kathy's teachers had discussions amongst themselves and made decisions about her educational progress without including her first. Mrs. Sanchez's oldest son, Jesus, was academically on grade level or higher and was never questioned about his need for ESL. Her second son was placed in special education, speech, and ESL classes. Later, however, the teachers of both of Mrs. Sanchez's daughters questioned their literacy skills. At one point in time, Kathy, was promoted from first grade to second grade at the end of the school year, in the spring. But the following fall, while Mrs. Sanchez was busy looking for a new home, she learned that Kathy had been moved back to the first grade room. Because Mrs. Sanchez, a Latino by culture, was taught to have a high regard for all teachers, she simply accepted the teacher's decision. As I attempted to find out if Mrs. Sanchez was involved with school, and to what degree, I discovered that she values her interaction with all the teachers of her children and that it is very important for her to see teachers twice a year. She is committed to attending her children's parent-teacher conferences and has been going to all her four children's conferences for many years now. I know that she was going to conferences when her second son, Jose, was in the second grade, because I was the teacher at that conference. Mrs. Sanchez was very proud when she told me that "this is the only way I can find out about her children's grades and their behavior."

Mrs. Sanchez is learning about parental involvement and its importance. She described for me a wonderful experience she had shared with her daughter, Anna. Mrs. Sanchez received an invitation from Anna's teacher to complete a project together with Anna and then together

present it to her class. Anna's wise teacher had given an assignment to the parents—to work at home with their child to fulfill the assignment. Mrs. Sanchez was thrilled to be given the chance to participate, and Anna was proud of her mother's contribution. Parent and child learned from their shared research, and the parent made it possible when she agreed to come to school and participate. This demonstrated an important interaction between the teacher and the parent and the child, with the child and mother benefitting from having fun while they learned together. Mrs. Sanchez told me that this experience made her feel very happy and gave her the chance to tell about their heritage country and share her Mexican food. Given another invitation, I am sure Mrs. Sanchez would accept in order to become further involved in her children's education.

On the other hand, my case study revealed little interaction between Mrs. Sanchez and her older children at the local high school. Mrs. Sanchez didn't hear from the teachers in the high school, and so she was unable to tell me of any positive interaction. The case study, in fact, showed Mrs. Sanchez to be so upset about her older sons, who had gotten into trouble at the high school, that she repeatedly said, "The school kicked the boys out of school." Her only interaction from the school was when the administrators accused her sons of doing something that would cause her sons to be expelled.

The only interaction Mrs. Sanchez experienced was with her son's new teachers at the alternative school in which they were then enrolled. However, this interaction between Mrs. Sanchez and the teachers from the alternative school was extremely important. Mrs. Sanchez knew her sons were not guilty of the trouble they had been accused of, and she continued to treat the boys with respect. She realized the boys needed teachers that were not only skilled academics, but also teachers who understood how they felt—that these boys had been looked down upon. However, now, these students are respected for who they are. The alternative

teachers told Mrs. Sanchez's that her sons were "good students, they worked hard, and worked well with others." This report was in keeping with how the boys were raised—to be polite and never give teachers problems. Naturally, this positive experience gave Mrs. Sanchez further reason to value parent-teacher interaction and the importance of parental involvement.

In yet another situation, Mrs. Sanchez told me of how her daughter, Kathy, became pregnant and had a baby. Kathy's mother-in-law directed her to a different alternative school for young women with babies who want to graduate from high school. At first, Mrs. Sanchez did not want Kathy to leave the house because she was worried that Kathy would not graduate. But she came to understand that the alternative school was a good school for Kathy and she could study there all day while her baby was cared for in a childcare area. This situation presented another excellent interaction showing how important it is to both student and teacher. Students at this school were allowed to study at their own pace. Kathy decided to work very hard to graduate early. This demonstrated the potential for students who want to do their best and who have encouraging teachers. Kathy graduated having received three A's and one B—significantly higher grades that she had received in her previous school, where seemingly she did not get enough support and had little motivation to do her best. By the end of this situation, Mrs. Sanchez had learned a great deal about parental involvement and was very happy to learn more about the importance of interaction between teachers and parents.

We can also expect parents to teach their children to be cooperative. When parents teach this skill early on, their children learn to work together with others and learn from others as well. So we can expect parental involvement in their children's education on any number of levels, even from parents who are not actively involved at school. A lack of these families' involvement often reflects their culture in which they don't feel a need to go out of the family to get support.

As they become more familiarized with the culture of this country, and as their children take part in more and more school activities, parents are likely to become more involved in the school, too.

Mrs. Sanchez is a good example of this. As she grew in involvement, she became more aware of choices for her children, in making decisions and maintaining her respect for teachers. Mrs. Sanchez demonstrated greater parental involvement when her youngest daughter, Anna, missed some half days in kindergarten while she was looking for work. This left Anna a little behind in the first grade, but she was soon catching up with the help of ESL support. Once again, teachers were concerned about one of her children, but this time they involved Mrs. Sanchez in the discussion, suggesting that Anna should repeat the second grade. Mrs. Sanchez appreciated a chance to be directly involved and was able to respectfully but firmly share with Anna's teachers: "No. It did not help Kathy and Anna will be fine." Mrs. Sanchez had clearly moved to a new level of involvement with teachers.

We can indeed expect the level of parent's involvement with their children's schools to increase over time. In Mrs. Sanchez's case, she became directly involved with one of her children. Mrs. Sanchez demonstrated respect for Anna by including her in the decision. Mother and daughter agreed that it was time for a change and to leave behind previous "bad experiences," so they decided Anna should take advantage of an opportunity to move to a new school nearby. Their joint involvement paid off. During this time, I was Anna's ESL teacher for a short while. Both Anna's teacher and I realized that Anna had improved considerably and was ready to pass out of ESL. This was shown to be true, the following spring, when she tested out fluent in English.

As I have related previously, Mrs. Sanchez's became even more involved when Anna's fourth grade teacher invited Mrs. Sanchez to participate with Anna in a class presentation. Mrs. Sanchez reveled in this opportunity, an indication yet again of her increasing parental involvement. Teachers can indeed expect growing involvement from parents in their children's education. Mrs. Sanchez demonstrated this throughout my interview. One final illustration of Mrs. Sanchez's growing involvement was highlighted by Kathy. When I asked her what or who helped her get through school, she quickly said that it was her parents. Further exploring this I asked Kathy, "what did they do?" She answered, "they pushed us, they expected us to finish." In this house where education is obviously important, three children had graduated with good grades, and it is clear that Anna will do so as well. Mrs. Sanchez was involved in her children's education, both indirectly and directly. In this house we can expect respect, and an ability to work with other people and decision-making. The parents model high expectations for their children's success. In short, parental involvement increases and children are the clear beneficiaries.

In conducting my second interview, I again attempted to answer questions regarding the importance of parent-teacher interactions and what teachers can expect from parents. In this case I interviewed Jen and Annie, two friends and mothers of young children. My second case study demonstrated that interactions between teachers and parents are important in two ways. First, I came to see that friendship is a powerful way to bring together parents and teachers and create meaningful interactions. Jen and Annie are friends with their children's teachers. As such, they are very comfortable interacting with teachers and happy to take teacher's suggestions to help their children. The second way in which I saw that parent-teacher interactions are important related to a skilled ESL teacher. Linda, the ESL teacher at the small school attended by Jen and

Annie's children, not only helps all of the English learner children in the school, but she also helps their parents, as well. This interaction between a seasoned teacher and the parents of her students is impactful and very important for this small elementary school. Parents at the school, including Jen and Annie, appreciate Linda, the ESL teacher and Linda welcomes the chance to interact with both her students and their parents, all of whom are learning English.

Due to her commitment to both her students and their parents, Linda carries a heavy load, though she told me that most of the time her work makes her smile. She teaches about seventy elementary English learners during the day, including kindergarteners through fifth graders. When she isn't teaching students, she is busy preparing homework assignments and announcements for upcoming events, all of which need to be written in both English and in Spanish. Linda provides bilingual information to all parents who are limited in English. She also visits typical classrooms to find out if teachers have any trouble in communicating with any of their students or parents.

Linda told me that the first thing she did four years ago, when she was hired, was to talk the principal into starting an adult English class. She made the point that it was important to help raise the parent's English skills and at the same time foster relationships between one another and teachers, all while their children witnessed their parents enjoying school. Linda knew how families getting together at school would encourage their children to value education.

Of course, one can see that a teacher like Linda might get tired and become burdened with paperwork, however, her well-educated para-educator provides huge support to the school. But Linda had another plan to recruit more helpers—her student's parents. For example, Jen and Annie became involved at the school after they began attending the school's English class for adults. It is Linda's hope that Jen and Annie, and others like them, will attract more women to

become involved in English lessons and husbands to further their involvement with their children at school. This is Linda's strategy to develop helpers and with it she is greatly strengthening interactions between parents and teachers.

In this second case study with Jen and Annie, I also focused on the question of how much we (teachers) can expect of parents. During my interview, Jen and Annie showed me that we can actually expect quite a lot from parents in a variety of ways. Since Linda initiated English classes for adults at their school four years ago, many men and women have attended these classes on a regular basis. We can expect the adult students will regularly attend their English classes, and continue to learn English two evenings a week for two and one half hours per session. The adults are growing in their English and their children are noticing. Many households realize the benefit of having both adult students and children students. We can expect that parents will help their children with their homework because Linda has translated the homework directions into Spanish. However, children are now also helping their parents with their English class homework.

We can expect limited English speakers to be able and willing to help out in the school as much as do English speakers. For example, Jen was asked to help out with the kindergarteners by reading to them one morning every week. She will help with some of the children by teaching letters and numbers. Jen enjoys her volunteer work so much that she has initiated another idea: if she finishes her work in kindergarten early she goes to the first grade class and offers to help there, too.

Not all of the limited English speakers have contributed at the school. There are still some who are too timid. But Linda believes that, little by little, with Jen and Annie as models, others are being influenced and soon more parents will want to contribute also. One way in

which Linda and the principal have been able to influence other parents like Jen and Annie is by asking them to join the PAC (PTO). Jen and Annie did so and they have joined discussions and offered their insights and opinions when decisions are to be made. In addition, Linda has also asked Jen and Annie to go with her when she speaks to other audiences about parental involvement. There is every reason to expect that many other parents, like Jen and Annie, will soon be contributing at the school as well.

In summarizing my two case studies, it is clear that Mrs. Sanchez, and Jen and Annie, have become active parents comfortable with their significant involvement with the children and their schools. In the process, their children have been taught to take care of one another and to respect their teachers. Their parental involvement has given them the courage and wherewithal to make difficult decisions regarding their children's education, with the result that all of their children have overcome language and cultural barriers to do well in school. Mrs. Sanchez, and Jen and Annie, have also been meaningful examples to other limited English parents in the community and have been responsible for many other parents becoming involved in their schools. Parental involvement has definitely proven to be effective through both of these case studies. And, the studies have demonstrated that teachers and administrators can have high expectations that parents, including those with limited English, can be coaxed to make important contributions to their children's schools.

In concluding the Results and Discussion section of the thesis I will compare what I have learned of parental involvement from the two cases studies with what is presented in the literature I reviewed. In doing so I will cite examples of places, people, and ideas that motivate parents to become involved. I will conclude this section by citing additional ideas I believe

would have a major impact on the education of non-English speaking children that would result in greatly increasing their parents involvement in their schools.

I will begin by describing the two important interactions Mrs. Sanchez had with her children and their schools. In the first interaction, Mrs. Sanchez came to know her sons' and daughter's new teachers at the two separate alternative schools in which they were then enrolled. The regular school her sons had attended accused them of getting into serious trouble. Because of this, the boys were enrolled in an alternative school. Throughout this period, Mrs. Sanchez knew her sons were not guilty, and she continued to treat them with respect. Mrs. Sanchez had come to realize that her sons needed teachers that were not only skilled academics but also understood how her boys felt—that they felt looked down upon. She soon learned that her sons' new teachers were just what they needed, for they told her that her sons were “good students, they worked hard, and worked well with others.” This encouragement was in line with how she and her husband had raised the boys—to be polite and work hard at school. Naturally, this positive experience gave Mrs. Sanchez a new image of teachers and a realization that parents can approach teachers knowing that they can be helpful and positive. Such positive interactions make it possible for parents to relate their experiences and encourage other parents to get involved with teachers.

Mrs. Sanchez's second important interaction, which included her, her daughter, and teachers, also took place at an alternative school. Mrs. Sanchez's daughter, Kathy, had a child while in high school and desired to attend a different alternative school that Kathy's mother-in-law had found. This school was just for young women with babies who want to complete their high school education and graduate. Kathy was able to study there all day while her baby was cared for in childcare provided by the school. This alternative school was a one to one school

that allowed her to study online and learn at her own pace. Kathy's teacher was available whenever she needed help and the teacher always helped her with homework. This school proved an excellent match for Kathy; she worked very hard and graduated early, receiving significantly higher grades than at her previous school. Mrs. Sanchez and her husband were thrilled to see that their children were finally involved with good teachers, and once again saw the potential for motivated students who have encouraging teachers and parents.

Just above, I wrote about the benefit Kathy received by having a teacher always available to assist her. In the article, *Reflecting on the Homework Ritual: Assignments and Designs*, Van Voorhis, a math teacher created TIPS. Homework time can develop into a form of literacy development at home. In other times, homework for children and parents working together can be negative and confusing as a home-based learning time. Nevertheless, it is a point of parent and teacher involvement, "a powerful tool to let parents know what the child is learning." insists Hoover-Dempsey et al.,

My literature review focused on parental involvement, including parents helping their children with homework. However, recently Van Voorhis conceptualized a framework and called his ideas TIPS (205). Along with the typical homework, and after the work is completed, comes a "fun" activity TIPS designed for student and parent, or student and teacher as partners. It seems to be created as a fun activity for children, and for those who are able to finish their work in a timely way. On one hand students will surely not receive any penalty if children decide not to be involved with the fun activity. On the other hand there may be struggling families that cannot help their children any more than now, and yet the children would like to be involved.

For parents who can't get involved with TIPS, where will help come from for the students? who want to be involved? The idea is for students, when they are finished with regular

homework, can be creating other types of homework like creating math puzzles while working with a teacher, or with some help from parents— perhaps making a rhyming poem, and many students will be promised points toward grades. Finally, with TIPS, often parents are asked by their children to be their audience. Promoting a fun side of homework, for those children who want to be involved in TIPS, may be pressuring their parents who already feel like they don't have enough time now.

I believe that there are groups of people who would not benefit from this competition-like activity, and from my case studies, I cannot support TIPS for many parents who already struggle with obstacles. Parents who are limited English speaking already have challenges and would have difficulty to understand the concept, regular homework is challenging enough. Many children who struggle with everyday homework may be distracted or discouraged by TIPS if they are working at a lower level. Those who are having trouble with homework, and have two parents working, may not know about TIPS and their children may see it as a competition that they missed out on. TIPS usually allows a longer amount of time to complete homework, however, the project may drag on, causing more problems than typical homework. In my case study, I am aware that Latino adults often do not like to get involved with homework issues, as they may see it as being disrespectful instead of honoring the teachers. I understand that in order to enjoy the benefits of involvement we would want family members to get involved. But I am aware that TIPS may cause more problems on that topic. Finally, from Latinos or other cultures, I have learned that the older children teach the younger ones and help with homework. In Mrs Sanchez' family I was told that after the parents couldn't help, the oldest brother helped the other three children all the way through high school. My point is that TIP is

not for everyone. Families can benefit from tutoring services through school and raise their grades and enjoy interaction with teachers without trying to create a math puzzle to get points.

This literature comes from a school-based environment, as were the two case studies I summarized above. It seems that school-based studies, including TIPS, are just now determining how best to enable parents to become involved with teachers. However, TIPS provides a different point of view. Van Voorhis and others are teaching teachers how to use this tool to pull students, parents, and teachers together for fun. Nevertheless, I recommend that TIPS is promoted cautiously. Of the four articles I reviewed, only *Reflecting on the Homework Ritual: Assignments and Designs* presents research conducted in a school-based environment rather than a literacy program or preschool environment. I point this out as these literacy programs seemed able to make students more comfortable and saw parents getting involved more quickly than programs in a school-based environment. Family literacy programs, of course, include fewer students and usually include all family members, with both children and adults as students.

However, I did find other motivations to draw parents into programs in a school-based environment, which also helps students become more comfortable and for parents to get involved. The literature demonstrates teachers and families working together to improve their children's education but also shows that there is a wide range of parental involvement—anything from accepting information about prenatal and other health-care needs to learning to enrich toddler's talk to build vocabulary during story time, or to doing fun homework, and even taking part in a family literacy program. Three of the articles in my literature review also researched situations, like Carpinteria, outside of a normal school-based environment, including the article *Storybook Reading: Bring Parents and At-Risk Kindergarten Students Together* by Smetana. In

this article Smetana states, “The quest to involve parents in their child’s education has taken many forms.” Furthermore, she reminds us that schools should do two things: first to encourage parents to pursue at-home reading behaviors that encourage learning, and second to conduct school activities that support the parent-teacher relationship.

Many parents participating in her research were happy to become involved with their children’s teachers and their schools. Others from diverse cultures, however, felt it was not their job to intervene between their children and teachers. In response, Smetana claims that family literacy programs meant to improve skills for young students and also for adults had teachers who kindly asked students to take home reading assignments, and also encouraged parents to practice reading behaviors within a family setting with their children. Smetana found that, if parents are told to help with practicing their child’s reading, there is a chance they both will improve, and parents will feel better about themselves for reading with their children. These positive experiences are of great benefit to both children and parents. (291)

Smetana insists that to increase parent involvement, teachers of any sort must be able to create activities in which information can be shared with parents and allow them to give suggestions. Teachers must include activities that a parent can do at home with their children. She explains that when schools develop policies and programs that are sensitive to the community, more parents will become involved. She adds that we have to make parents comfortable with the school environment, and that parents can become a valuable resource for classroom teachers when we treat them with cultural respect and an effective manner. I have come to see the importance of parents reading with their children as an important motivational influence leading to increased parental involvement.

In my study of the educational programs offered in Carpinteria, CA, I saw that the programs served by Carpinteria Children's Project at Main (CCPM) actually function like family literacy programs. Although people of all ages attend these programs, and for a variety of reasons, there are more children than adults being served, and education is the clear priority. For instance, beginning with the early childhood needs the CCPM offer AVANCE, a national early childhood program for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who participate in a weekly nine-month long program in their home where emotional/social skills are promoted. The program includes a toy-making component where also a parent will have materials and tools to support the learning. An infant specialist visits the home each month during the nine-month time, and offers support and suggestions.

In addition children who are a *not* enrolled in a formalized preschool can benefit from this preschool-like day care. Similarly, there are intervention classes for first and second graders who are under grade level in addition, information from CCPM that I reviewed cited a program specifically for ELLs featuring the Waterford Computer Program that uses an educational software program to engage students in twenty-minute sessions, while providing assistance for students as needed. A great benefit of this program is that both adults and children receive support at the same time while making new friends. Also, the program has resulted in adults becoming accustomed to parental involvement, such as talking with teachers after class or in the evening, and taking the opportunities to make new friends. Robertson told me that parents in the program were learning about parental involvement. She believes that the parents of the families will eventually seek parent involvement in school-based buildings, as well.

Dickinson and Tabors, editors of *Beginning Literacy with Language*, introduce a third manner of parental involvement: teachers helping parents learn how to encourage their children

to answer questions in long sentences. The authors agreed that there is a link between children's early language skills and later being able to read effectively. This provides an example of the necessity of teachers and parents helping each other, by teachers giving parents suggestions of how to talk with their children, even preschool children. The hope is that such suggestions will result in parents talking about stories or what happened last night—using non-immediate talk at home. In this way children learn to carry-on extended talking in the home and with the involvement of formalized preschool learning. The editors point out how essential it is for parents to have extended discourse talk with their young children aged three to five-years. As essential as this is, Dickinson and Tabors suggest that families vary in how effectively parents support their children by talking (extended discourse) with them every day.

In the conclusion of the results and discussion section of the thesis, I compared what I have learned of parental involvement from the first case study with what was presented in the literature. What follows is my review of the last case study with Jen and Annie and further comparison with the literature. Jen and Annie are brave women who have become quite involved in their children's school. As I addressed questions to them that night, they took delight in answering my questions and explained that many people in the school—the principal, the secretary, and others had reached out to help them as limited English speakers. For instance, we know that Linda translates English homework into Spanish homework every week for these parents. Also, four years ago she arranged for the school to offer English classes for parents to attend twice each week for two and half hours at a time.

During the interview Jen and Annie mentioned that there are only a few additional things they would like. One of these is for more parents to become involved at the school. Jen and Annie are on the PAC (PTO) for the school, and they often go with Linda to speak to other

parents about how they can get involved in the school and at their children's events. Since Linda can translate, their message is given in both English and Spanish. Jen and Annie also mentioned that people worry that Linda is doing too much and may get tired out. As such, they would like to see the school employ one or two additional bilingual speakers. Meanwhile, Linda is confident that more and more parents will volunteer, like Jen and Annie, to help out at school by reading stories to kindergartens one day a week and go with her to speak about becoming more involved in your own school. I realize, however, that this small elementary school of three hundred and twenty students, which includes seventy ESL students, is unique among other school-based environments. It is unique in that Linda understands the large population of limited English speaking adults, many of whom are Latinos. And, she has the skills to reach out to those parents who are ready to become more involved, and even to those who are not. I am certain that—little by little—more parents will become involved, like Jen and Annie.

Reflecting on my interviews with Jen and Annie, and Ms. Sanchez on what schools need to do to help limited English students, both children and adults, remind me of Chen, Kyle, and McIntyre's article, *Helping Teachers Work Effectively with English Language Learners and their Families*. I have read similar articles, but Chen's article best addresses these matters. I have written about the need schools have to provide means to further involve parents with teachers. I believe that the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction) by Echevarria, Vogt, and Short is the best method to train ESL instructors.

In my first case regarding the family of Mrs. Sanchez, I was very impressed by her level of parental involvement, including her unwavering commitment to meet with each of her child's teachers twice a year for each of her four children. She looked forward to these events, wanting to interact with the teacher and find out news about her children, whether good or bad. I can't

help but think about how much her children's teachers, who took time to gather the details and prepare for these meetings, must have appreciated her faithful attendance of the conferences.

Further, my case studies indicate that interactions between parent and administrator with student can be a powerful connection. As a Latino, Mrs. Sanchez continually demonstrates the strength of respect for all. She goes often to conferences and notices that teachers are polite and complimentary twice a year, but when her children get into trouble the teachers and administrators don't always speak as kindly then. She knows that is true, but she smiles.

She believes that if her children get into trouble they will be punished by the school, and they will learn a lesson. In middle school, Kathy got into trouble bothering people calling them with unkind words. Finally there was a punishment and the administrator called Kathy's mother. Both of them had to sit together at school for the whole day. Mrs. Sanchez lived what she believes. Kathy noted that the administrator was very respectful also and the behavior of the adults toward her made a big difference. Kathy told me that after that day, she never got in trouble again.

As far as the small school in Denver, Linda is a strong leader of seventy English language learners and their families within this elementary school. In addition, she makes herself available to assist the teachers of the English only speaking classrooms, enabling them to communicate with the needs of non-English speaking parents. For instance, if a teacher is having difficulty trying to help a limited English-speaking child, Linda helps as a go-between for the teacher and the parent. In this way, Linda, the bilingual ESL teacher, is able to bring parents and teachers together. This demonstrates a three-way parent-teacher-ESL teacher involvement.

Though this would seem to be a time constraint upon Linda, she maintains that she will not take on a job that she cannot handle and that she relies on her pare-educator to do a large

amount of work which enables her to do all that she does. If other schools wish to follow Linda's model, however, I would suggest that they first and foremost do what she does: initiate an English class for adults. This strategy has yielded great benefits for Linda, her students, parents, and the school. The English classes bring together limited English speakers two nights a week. Parents make new friends, and more importantly, parents sign-up to help out in their children's classroom and/or become involved in other school events. Linda has seen that these parents, as they become more involved, model the value of education to their children.

A positive experience such as Linda brings to her school contrasts with situations such as Chen, Kyle, and McIntyre's write about (see above). Chen et al. explains the problem: that many classroom teachers across the United States know that they are unprepared to work with students and families who speak limited or no English. Everyone wants students to be able to learn English, and yet so much of the burden is placed upon teachers with students who cannot make enough progress in their content classes (i.e. math, reading, science) as they struggle to learn to speak, listen, read, and write English. Classroom teachers have not been told how to help these students. In fact, there is a lack of professional development available to help teachers in this regard.

I agree with Chen et al. that an excellent answer to these problems is their two-branch solution of Sheltered Instruction and Family Involvement (SIFI). Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is a means for making grade-level academic content accessible to ELLs, while at the same time promoting language and literacy. Sheltered Instruction is provided to students for a limited time period until they are ready to move into a mainstream classroom. This method of teaching vocabulary allows students to read sooner, and it enables teachers to

become involved with the whole family, as I have done, by sending home materials for homework for students and their parents (Echevarria, Vogt, Short 9).

Here is an example of how SIOP is used: If the content to be taught is addition, the teacher will model how to add and subtract items. But before beginning, math students will first study a list of *vocabulary words* such as *cookies, dishes, pencils, mother, brother, and sister*. In this way students learn content and vocabulary simultaneously, as well as how to complete story problems. As such, SIOP is like a small school within a school, with a trained teacher who stays in close communication with parents. SIOP includes eight important tools to help English Limited students: preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, and review/assessment. I would argue that these eight tools increase comprehension for both students and their parents. When SIOP is used with ESL students, it is taught by teachers who are familiar with these tools. ESL students are extremely diverse in language and culture and have often moved many times, thereby interrupting their education. Therefore, one of the SIOP tools teaches a means to find out about each student's background, which includes communicating with their families as often as necessary.

Family Involvement requires teachers reaching out to the parents of their students, all the while trying to positively communicate with the family for the benefit of the student. It is important to communicate with parents by being sensitive to cultural differences during home visits, meetings at school, etc. Chen et al. add that teachers, by reflecting on their own heritage, traditions, and biases, will be better able to understand others. Teachers must develop good communication and listening skills, and seek to understand the cultural backgrounds of families. And, teachers must consider their own attitudes before interacting with parents. Chen et al. had

much success in training teachers to learn how to reach out to families in respectful ways— and to learn from them.

However, even having trained ESL teachers does not provide all of the support necessary. I'd like to see more schools using SIOP to provide additional support for ELLs, specifically in content areas where students need the most assistance. Students receiving Sheltered Instruction are taught in English with SIOP trained teachers who use simplified English and modified textbooks. Sheltered Instruction is provided to students for a limited time period, for one or two classes or for a semester, until they are ready to move into a mainstream classroom. Unfortunately, though Sheltered Instruction provides the most support to ELLs, it is the form of support offered, least often by schools.

Obviously, the ideas I have proposed would necessitate government spending more money in order to facilitate solutions. Perhaps funding could be provided to universities to encourage the training of more ESL teachers. Secondly, more teachers could be trained and hired as Sheltered Instruction teachers to provide more focused instruction in simplified English. Third, as many typical classroom teachers as possible could receive training in skills to use in helping their non-English speaking students and their limited English speaking parents. Because planning for ESL instruction would add further demands to already busy teachers, administrators would need to give teachers an extra planning hour to adapt an ESL approach to their daily lesson plans. These are but a few suggestions that would have a dramatic impact on increasing the effectiveness of education for non-English speaking children and resulting in far greater involvement of their parents with their teachers and school.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I will summarize several more results from my research that will suggest ideas that would benefit ELL's students and their families. First and foremost, teachers, whether currently teaching or in college preparing to teach, need ELL training. This training should be mandatory for college students studying to become K-12 educators, and additional ELL training should be required for current classroom teachers. The first matter to be addressed by such training is how teachers can approach the families of students who have diverse languages and cultures. Unfortunately, many teachers are not even aware that as teachers they need to reach out to new families. Though some teachers may say that it is difficult to make house visits, others say visiting families in their homes is the easiest way to get background information on the family and their students. Teachers can also invite family members to meet at a coffee house or at another comfortable, safe location. After meeting family members it is important for teachers to follow-up with positive phone calls from time to time. It has been my experience that family literacy teachers, because of their training, already seem to know how best to make families with diverse languages and culture more comfortable, which often then enables the families to become involved with their children's teachers sooner than would be the case in a more formal school-based environment.

Furthermore, as I have mentioned before, initiating English classes for parents who are limited-English speakers is a great idea. I have seen how parents meeting twice a week to study English helps the adults to meet one another, make new friends, and participate in school events together. Linda, the ESL teacher of Jen and Annie's children in my second case study, initiated an English class for limited English adults four years ago. She has seen many new friendships develop, husbands joining their wives in the classes, and an ever-increasing number of parents

getting involved in school events. Another benefit Linda cited is children helping at home by reading to their parents. In doing so the children's reading and math grades have improved. Next year Linda even hopes to offer Spanish class for non-Spanish speaking teachers so they will eventually begin to be able to speak to their student's parents without the need to always find someone to translate.

When parents and teachers and children connect, amazing things can happen. ELL parents can engage in decision-making, like Jen and Annie did in my second case study when they became members of their parent organization (PAC). Perhaps parents may decide to initiate in-school training for methods such as SIOP method and in the process learn themselves how to reach out to other parents of diverse languages and cultures.

For those families that feel no need to get involved in the school-based environment Smetana has some advice that will help teachers stay involved without these parents realizing it. Smetana encourages adults to practice the reading behaviors in a family setting with their children. In turn, these activities will enhance these children's ability to do well in school, and increase the chance that both children and their parents will improve their reading abilities. In the end, the parents will feel better about themselves for reading with their children. Positive experiences enables parents to improve their skills and interact with their children. Smetana takes this idea a step further by recommending that teachers include additional activities that parents can do at home with their children. She explains that when schools develop policies and programs that are sensitive to the community, many more parents will become involved (291).

Many people are aware of the high number of immigrants and migrants with the high populations in Latinos (Hispanic). Of the many issues our country faces, one is the increasing number of students attending our schools that are non-English speaking. While the No Child Left

Behind Act is pushing school districts nationwide to raise achievement scores, perhaps we should be pushing families to get involved with the teachers of their children. My case studies demonstrate that migrants and immigrants are having success with their children when they are expecting their children to graduate high school, even go to college.

When I asked Kathy Sanchez what helped her to graduate, to finish school with good grades. She told me that their parents pushed them to stay in school, work hard, be respectful. She told me that her parents told them many times that they wanted all of their children to graduate, and have a better job and so far, the all have. Also, we need teachers who will encourage students that they can graduate if they work hard. Kathy's teacher at her alternative school told her that if she wants to graduate early she can—if she works hard. Kathy's mother at first did not want her to go to the alternative school. Mrs. Sanchez did not understand and thought she might not graduate if she goes to an alternative school. But Kathy explained to her mother that the alternative school would be good for Kathy and that her grades are high. Older children need to encourage their parents to be involved with their schools even if the parents are limited English speaking parents.

Additionally, Jen and Annie are examples of hard worker at home with her children at school. Just as Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez encouraged their children to work hard and graduate, I believe that Linda, the ESL teacher pushed Jen and Annie in the same way. Linda took them to conferences and asked Jen and Annie to speak to the audience about their involvement at their school. Linda encouraged them telling Jen and Annie that they can do it. She told them they can speak in English or Spanish, but Linda told them that they can send the message that when parents are involved with school, their children will increase in achievement. Jen and Annie

knew that this is true. Linda pushed them to join the PTO as well. And because they are doing volunteering, their English is growing.

Mrs. Sanchez discovered that when unfortunate events happen like “getting kicked out of school, the family found out that there are alternative schools in the area that can turn around the lives of students in trouble as described the positive experience of Mrs. Sanchez’s two sons and daughter. Mrs. Sanchez was surprised again when she took her sons to Walmart. At the store she and her sons were greeted by a teacher from Jesus’ previous high school teacher who asked him what he was doing this summer. When Jesus explained that he was unable to get a job the teacher turned to Mrs. Sanchez and said, “You should enroll him in college! Enrollment is going on right now.” Mrs. Sanchez was not used to having a high school teacher speak kindly to her, but the next day she took Jesus and Mrs. Sanchez over to the college and enrolled her son. After this very positive experience, with a parent-teacher-student interaction, Mrs. Sanchez then thought, why not enroll her younger son, and she did by herself. Finally, Mrs. Sanchez thought about enrolling her daughter, too, even though the enrollment period at the college had ended. Mrs. Sanchez told me that after enrolling two students she thought she could this too and she did. It is still going on. With three teenagers going to college, The teacher of Jesus’ previous high school teacher may be giving tips to the family on studying and picking out what classes to take next.

The key to successful children’s education is parental involvement with teachers.

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