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# Increasing Parent Involvement for ESL Parents

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Running Head: Increasing Parent Involvement for ESL Parents

Increasing Parent Involvement for ESL Parents  
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## Table of Contents

Chapter I- Introduction.....	1
Purpose of the Project .....	2
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Significance of Project.....	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
 Chapter II- Review of the Literature	
Overview.....	10
Review of the Literature .....	10
Summary.....	21
 Chapter III- The Project and Its development	
Description of the Project.....	22
Development of the Project.....	23
The Project.....	26
 Chapter IV- Conclusions and Recommendations	
Conclusions.....	35
Recommendations.....	36
 References.....	37









## Chapter I: Increasing Parental Involvement for ESL Students

English as Second Language (ESL) classrooms are on the rise in California as well as the rest of the United States. Specifically in the Bay Area, there is a large Latino student population who are provided ESL curriculum in classrooms, which are critical for children as they fight to stay afloat in the public education system today. Where teachers and students communicate in both English and Spanish, most parents do not have that option, making it difficult or sometimes impossible for families to play an active role in their child's educational process (Miano, 2011). Many Latino families find it difficult to make time between working multiple jobs, finding time to communicate with educators, and provide support for their children, all while dealing with a language barrier that can be very intimidating. In order for children to learn and excel at their optimum level, we need to bridge this gap among teachers, parents, and students, and more importantly, find ways in which parents can play an active role in their child's education, regardless of their language preference. It is important for parents to understand how schools work and the expectations of their own involvement in the process.

More currently, laws and state standards have been put into place making it difficult for English Language Learners and their parents to thrive in school. In 2001, the No Child Left behind Act passed, which required all public schools to help English learners become proficient. Today, California law permits ESL or English as a Second Language for students in the classroom. This allows for an English-only classroom where the government provides extra support for students to become fluent in English (Chen, 2013). Many of these programs have received budget cuts while the



number of minority students is rising each year. And with a non-English speaking student base ever-increasing, it is critical for academic achievement to keep parents involved in their child's academic achievement.

While current laws provide ESL learning in the classroom, they do not address the lack in communication between teachers and families. Many teachers do not speak Spanish; instead, there are many educators, volunteers, and after school programs that are working to help ESL students and their families understand how they can improve their child's education. Unfortunately, these programs do not stress the importance of parental involvement, a key focus for ESL students and a gateway for active participation in the community (Epstein, 2011). Improving parental involvement addresses the ways in which multiple barriers can be discouraging for parents and how educators can work with them in order to improve their child's academic proficiency. Misconceptions are often made about the role of immigrant families in their child's life. However, if we are able to provide resources for parents, it will open the door for communication amongst the community.

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to create a workshop for parents of ESL students that informs them about their child's academic levels, educates them on current state standards, and provides them ideas and resources for parental involvement. The workshop will also provide a handbook with all of the information discussed in the class, as well as strategies, tools, and access to other community resources like free organizations for educational improvement.

After spending a year working in an after-school program in San Francisco's Mission district, I observed a communication barrier among educators and parents of ESL students. During this time, parents were not actively encouraged to play a role in their child's education due to the lack of communication, and, therefore, did not know how to help their child. With a majority of Spanish speaking parents, they would often pick up their child after work and no words were exchanged about the academic progress of their child or if they needed more attention at home.

Identifying the barriers that parents face in the public education system can open doors for active participation and communication among Spanish speaking parents and educators. By addressing the needs of ESL students and educating parents on their child's academic levels, state policy, and ways they can help, the intention is to increase parental involvement to improve ESL students' overall academic performance. By creating a workshop that is both English and Spanish friendly, parents will feel more involved in their child's learning process, and perhaps, will want to become more active in the process. Providing the necessary tools for active participation, parents will be able to communicate together, as well as with educators, and other parts of the community that will assist in their ability to meet their child's academic needs.

I chose to focus on the improvement of parental involvement because I was interested in how educators could improve relationships with parents and family members who felt disconnected from schools and their child's teachers. I wanted to look beyond the language barrier and think of alternatives for parents with busy schedules who

could possibly commit to a one-hour informational workshop. This will hopefully create a dialogue for parents and family members, and however small, it is intended to make a positive impact. Providing parents with informational tools to understand what is expected of them in the classroom and at home, and giving them the opportunity to connect with the outside community will give power to those who sometimes feel powerless. Taking small steps to create a comfortable space for Spanish speaking parents will encourage and inspire parents to actively participate in their child's education any way they can make possible.

### Theoretical Framework

The framework for this project aims to focus on the importance of parental involvement, drawing from sociological perspectives, the How People Learn Framework, and from literature in the field of ESL.

Parental involvement, as defined in this field project, draws heavily on Epstein's model of parental involvement. This model focuses on 6 parts that make up its entirety which include:

*Parenting-* Assisting families with parenting skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level.

*Communicating-* Communicate with families about school programs and student progress. Create two-way communication between school and home.

*Volunteering-* Improve recruitment, training, activities, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and as audiences at the school or in other locations. Enable educators to work with volunteers who support students in schools.

*Learning at Home-* Involve families with their children in academic learning at home, including homework, goal setting, and other curriculum- related activities. Encourage teachers to design homework that enables students to share and discuss interesting tasks.

*Decision Making-* Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, and parent organizations.

*Collaborating with the Community-* Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with community groups, including businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organizations, and colleges or universities. Enable all to contribute service to the community.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **From** Epstein, J. (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Corwin Press.

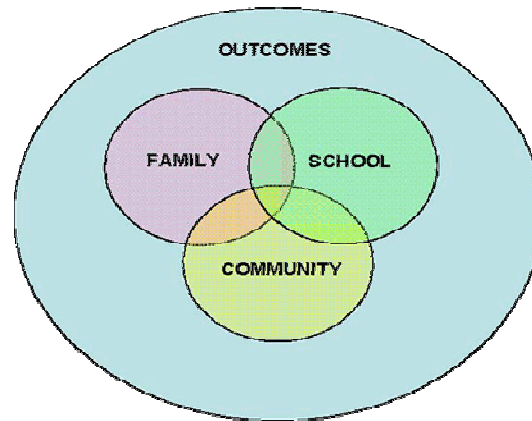


Figure 1: Connections between Family, School, and Community

The school, community and families all affect each other in various ways. When all three categories are working together, it makes for successful outcomes. Applying this model to an ESL classroom would allow for an increase in parent involvement as well, as will be discussed further in Chapter II.

While the model is typically applied to non-ESL classrooms, it is important to understand how this model can be adapted for the use of ESL teachers, students, and parents. Epstein focuses on the three spheres of school, family, and community as a way of increasing parent involvement. The model may assume that all parents are alike, which is untrue when it comes to ESL families. The expectations of parents may not be clear to those who do not share common language or cultural backgrounds. If tools are put in place to better assist parents of diverse backgrounds, they will have a better idea of how they can play an active role in their child's education. Informational workshops are one way of connecting these three spheres for ESL parents. Once parents understand what is expected of them, they will have the same advantage that non-ESL parents have, or at least understand how they or another family member can be more involved in the school and community.

This project also draws from sociological perspectives. In this paradigm, human behavior is shaped by the groups to which people belong and by the social interaction that takes place within these groups. We are who we are due to the people and groups we are associated with; however, this is not permanent. According to Robertson, (1981) The sociological perspective allows us to study our social environment and encourages new ways of thinking due to our own experiences and reminds us that other individual's experiences are also important as a part of social change.

The National Academy of Science Committee uses the *How People Learn* framework (HPL) to understand the methods of learning and teaching. This framework is composed of four components:

- What should be taught, why it is important, and how this knowledge should be organized (knowledge-centeredness);
- Who learns, how, and why (learner-centeredness);
- What kinds of classroom, school, and school-community environments enhance learning (community-centeredness); and
- What kinds of evidence for learning students, teachers, parents, and others can use to see if effective learning is really occurring (assessment-centeredness). (National Research Council, 2000)

These components help to understand the role of teaching and learning and what a successful outcome looks like for students. This will be used to understand ESL students and their teacher-parent relationships as well as parental involvement for my project.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the English as a Second Language framework as an approach for non-English speakers. While there are many theories of teaching English to different populations, in this study, certain insights from this field of

literature will help explain how the language barrier may or may not interfere with parent involvement in the classroom.

### Significance of the Project

The importance of this workshop is to unite families, school and the community so that their children are able to achieve academic success and prepare for a successful future. Spanish speaking parents often feel that they cannot connect with their child's teacher, or do not understand what is expected of them outside of the classroom. With expectations that are unclear for non-English speakers, the workshop aims to bring together volunteers, educators, parents, and family members to educate them on the academic levels of their child, what they need to focus on, how to encourage active learning at home, and how to access extra resources available through community organizations. The idea is to be flexible with working parents and find some time dedicated to them on the weekend or at night where they are able to spend one hour per month. Starting a dialogue about their child's academic achievement and struggles with learning a second language will be heard and shared. The goal is for parents to feel more involved with educators and the community and to spread awareness about their child's education in order to successfully improve academics for underperforming ESL students.

### Definition of Terms

English as a Second Language (ESL): An instructional program for students whose dominant language is not English. The purpose of the program is to increase the English language proficiency of eligible students so they can attain academic standards and achieve success in the classroom (Retrieved from <http://grammar.about.com/od/e/g/English-As-A-Second-Language-Esl.htm>).



## Chapter II: Review of the Literature

## Language and Education in the U.S.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, immigration to the United States was on the rise. As people from all over the world began to find their homes in the U.S., many immigrant families practiced their native language among their communities with pride. While holding on to their ancestral languages, many individuals kept their practice of language for religious services, community newspapers, and schools as a sense of identity. Historically, most immigrants have been forced to assimilate into English language instruction in schools. However, since immigrants arrived in the U.S., community members and educators have sought to maintain native languages alongside English instruction. Schools have taught bilingual or non-English instruction in several languages in the different states where specific communities lived including: German, Polish, French, Swedish, Norwegian, Dutch, and Spanish (Kloss, 1977; 1988).

The federal government played a small role in education until the famous Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. The court ruled that segregation in schools was unconstitutional but did little to ensure that state and local agencies complied with the ruling. While the Civil Rights Act clearly states: “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance,” schools were affected the most (Civil Rights Act, Title VI. 601-02,1964). The Civil Rights Act not only provided a clear definition of the role of the Federal government, granting power to the Office of

Education to now force this new law into place. Following this new policy, the Bilingual Education Act passed in 1968 which had two purposes: to encourage states to recognize the special needs of English Language Learners, and to provide financial assistance to local educational agencies that would allow them to create and implement new public school programs to meet the needs of these students (San Miguel, 1985).

While the purposes were stated clearly, Congress did not specify the approach that needed to be taken in order to carry out these new changes and so it was left to the state and local school districts to decide. English as Second Language (ESL) programs were implemented in schools all over the United States where they aimed to address academic, sociocultural, and emotional needs for students from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds. While many saw this as a powerful act in uniting culturally and ethnically diverse groups, others were not as supportive.

As bilingual education was on the rise, another Supreme Court case in 1974, *Lau v Nichols*, stated that equal treatment of English and non-speaking English students did not constitute equal educational opportunity and violated non-English speaker's civil rights (Ovando, 2003). The Lau Remedies were then established which set a clear list of federal requirements that provided specific pedagogical strategies, importance of moving English Language Learners into mainstream classrooms, and standards for educators. Following the court case, the passage of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act in August 1974 not only granted equal rights to all, but demanded equal participation by students of various language backgrounds. Lastly, and one of the most important Superior Court cases, *Castaneda v Pickard* (1981) provided more specific guidelines to determine

if English Language Learners were being educated in the steps previously emphasized in the Lau case (Ovando, 2003).

Years later, Proposition 227 passed in California in 1988 and was perhaps one of the most damaging blows to bilingual education, stating that English should be the primary medium of instruction for all language-minority students. The proposition deeply impacted instruction in the classroom where programs were dismantled completely and children who had not even fully completed their bilingual instruction were forced into English only classes (Johnson and Brandt, 2008). Other states, such as Arizona, have also passed English-only measures that limit opportunities for bilingual education.

In the shifting policy climate where many immigrant students and children of immigrants have diverse linguistic backgrounds, the needs of English Language Learners are increasingly important to consider. Specific programs have been created and implemented in different classrooms depending on the levels of proficiency, which are still used today in some instruction. Focusing on English Language Literacy, students from different socioeconomic backgrounds fall all over the spectrum. Many students, specifically within the Bay Area, are English Language Learners (ELL) currently enrolled in ESL classrooms, with predominantly Spanish speaking parents. The role of students in classrooms and parents in schools—the focus on this field project—necessitates a discussion of what factors drive academic achievement.

### Academic Achievement in Today's Classroom

Educators apply various teaching techniques in the classroom in order for students to achieve academic excellence. Teachers, families, and communities working with the

educational process have been encouraged to contribute to academic improvement in the classroom and outside as well. An effective approach to parental involvement developed by Joyce L. Epstein (2011) introduces a dynamic in which the parent, community, and school work together collectively so that they may achieve the highest academic outcome possible for the student. Parental Involvement is defined by Epstein as strong school and family connections that are a component of effective schools that contribute to successful family environments and more successful students (Epstein, 2011).

As discussed in Chapter I, Epstein's model for parental involvement focuses on six main types of involvement that leads to different results but each group benefits from the partnership they share. These types include: Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community. Figure I shown in the first chapter of this field project demonstrated how each sphere of family, school, and community are connected and interdependent.

Epstein suggests that teachers who often involve families in their children's education build better relationships and allow for academic growth, as well as give teachers a better understanding of their child's home life. Parents play a significant role in the educational process at home because they are highly encouraged to participate in their child's homework activities so that they are aware of the material learned at school as well as understand their child's academic strengths and weaknesses. Parents are encouraged to communicate with teachers and volunteer in the classroom to better connect. Keeping parents involved in decision making in the classroom and community

gives them a sense that they are playing an active role in their child's education and allows them to understand the educational process.

In schools that utilized Epstein's model, parents were often encouraged to participate in after school programs, meetings, and events that support their child's learning. Some schools offered programs or workshops to help with skill development for low-achieving students. Along with family and school involvement, community involvement is critical for academic achievement. While some communities may have more access to resources than others, parents are encouraged to participate in organizations and programs that provide a place for open communication, cultural awareness, and learning educational tools that allow parents and students to thrive successfully in a culturally diverse community.

Parental involvement has mainly focused on parents who become active on their own. The majority of literature suggests that teachers acknowledge and agree that parent involvement is important for student success. Teachers were aware of the parents and students' needs as well as expectations in the classroom for their child's academic success. Likewise, parents reported the involvement process as necessary and important for their child's education, as well as keeping an open dialogue between the school and family (Epstein, 2011). The process of parent involvement has successfully opened doors of communication and awareness for teachers, parents, and students, a model that will surely continue in the school system for years to come.

Parent involvement plays a crucial role in the academic success of the student, however, The How People Learn framework (HPL) is important to consider when thinking about academic achievement. The How People Learn framework is used to

highlight areas of teaching and learning. These include: what should be taught, why it is important, and how this knowledge is organized (e.g. who learns, how, and why; what types of classrooms, school, and school-communities enhance learning; what evidence can be used to see if it is effective) (Bradford, Derry, Berliner, Hammerness, and Beckett, 2005). This framework provides a base for educators so that they can create a curriculum that applies to all students in the classroom. This is important when addressing the needs of the students in the class, as well as their cultural backgrounds and ways of understanding. As with the passing of time, curriculum is constantly evolving and it is essential for educators to keep in mind this framework when addressing the techniques of teaching in the classroom.

It is critical to understand the HPL framework when applying the concept of parent involvement. Moving from the idea of how people learn, the material and tools selected, and applying that to a specific audience, we must ask ourselves if this framework is being used in a way that allows all types of ethnically and culturally diverse groups the ability to thrive successfully. Some groups have successfully attained their goals in the school, family, and community program, while other groups may still struggle. It is important to take a deeper look into the educational process and understand the methodology with which educators teach their students, and how the family and community is impacted in culturally diverse, socio-economic immigrant communities.

### Parent Involvement and Immigrant Families

Many immigrant students enroll in public schools that serve various language levels. In such schools, educators and researchers often frame the immigrant family in a

negative light, creating a challenging environment for their child's academic success. Specifically among inner-city schools where Latino populations are often high, parents struggle to participate in their child's educational process for a variety of reasons. Latino families have often been characterized as "less involved" in their child's educational process, a dominant stereotype that continues today.

One challenge that immigrant families face is the assumption that all parents possess the same resources (Miano, 2011). This significantly impacts the student when the school and teachers depend on the parent for help at home. The assumption that all parents have the time and the knowledge to help their child is simply not true. Many immigrant parents, specifically Latino families of English Language Learners, do not speak English and therefore cannot help their child with homework. This not only has a negative impact on the student's academic success, but creates a language barrier for the school and family as well. This will then have a negative impact on the student, preventing them from higher performance in the classroom.

The theories and frameworks of parent involvement and HTL do not take into account the realities of diverse groups, and assume that all parents are proficient in the language of instruction and are readily available to participate. The methods that are applied in the classroom do not take into account the structural and cultural barriers that many parents face when raising their children in U.S. public schools (Miano, 2011).

Parents often work long hours or have family members look after their child.

Participation from parents becomes almost impossible for those who are unavailable or do not speak English. Additionally, in many Latin American countries, schools do not expect participation from parents in the same way as schools in the U.S. do, suggesting a

disconnect when expectations are not clearly communicated to immigrant parents (Valenzuela, 1999). While the literature suggests that immigrant parents may be less involved than others, this does not suggest that there is not the desire or willingness to participate. This project seeks to give immigrant parents the tools and opportunities to participate meaningfully in their children's education.

When looking at immigrant families, children, and education, it is important to recognize the negative impacts that cultural generalizations have on Latino families and move away from those assumptions in order to create a more positive environment for the school, family, and community. Using the Epstein model for parental involvement, a different approach must be taken to account for culturally diverse groups that do not have the same access to educational resources. A study on *Exploring the Involvement of Parents of English Language Learners* provides significant information about parents of ELL students and what parents would like to learn from schools. Providing them with more information about expectations for their child's academic goals as well as the utilization of community resources, after school programs, and bilingual staff, were all topics that parents agreed would benefit them in playing a more active role in their child's school. The study provided more successful strategies to increase participation as well as provide more understanding for different ways of involvement not addressed in Epstein's framework (Vera, et. al., 2012).

Another important study, *Schools Reading Parents' Worlds*, focuses on highly motivated Mexican mothers in Silicon Valley, CA, who were very active in their child's school community, without fluency in English. Poza, Brooks, and Valdes (2014) introduce a group of Spanish speaking mothers who actively participated in Jefferson



Elementary School. They met with the principal once a week before school, attended a reader's club, and participated in Spanish literacy for adults, literature circles as well as helped distributed newspapers. All of these programs allowed parents to connect and discuss their child's academic strengths and weaknesses, where they could understand what was expected of them as parents, as well as stay updated weekly with principal visits. While all of the mothers did not speak English, they still felt they were doing something important for their children in school. The surveys taken by the mothers provided a different way of understanding their parent involvement that was effective, yet reflected the culturally diverse needs of the English Language Learning students.

Poza, Brooks, and Valdes (2014) also emphasized how this type of involvement by the mothers related to attendance at a workshop for parents at Jefferson Elementary. A translator was able to discuss the progress and challenges of their children's grades, and provide information for parents who had recently immigrated. The opportunity for the parents to learn about the expectations of their child in school and how they could better prepare them at home was helpful for everyone. This, along with providing adult education classes, allowed parents to understand and connect in a way that they felt important and informed about their child. This example demonstrates that parents *want to* and *can* participate effectively once they are able to understand the importance of and expectations to participate in their children's schools. Such methods, like the workshops, where information is readily available, would be successful in large immigrant communities, specifically Latino, where children are learning English in the classroom.

### Understanding Culturally Diverse Backgrounds

When discussing linguistically and culturally diverse communities, it is important to remember that parents and educators face challenges in meeting students' needs. The number of English Language Learners is growing at a rapid rate. Specifically, the Latino population has doubled in size from 2000 to 2010 in the United States. With a large growing population, it is critical that educators are trained in teaching more ESL classes and have a better understanding of the cultural differences in the classroom (Wortham, Clonan-Roy, Link, and Martinez, 2013). In order to attain high levels of academic achievement, it is necessary for schools and communities to work with immigrant parents so that they can understand what is expected of them for the remaining time their child is in school.

Epstein's parental involvement model and The How People Learn framework can both be applied effectively when taking into consideration that not all communities are equipped with the same sets of skills, tools and resources. While much of the educational system in the United States is framed around the Anglo-White student and family, it does not take into account the language barriers that many families face. If resources are made available for English Language Learners' parents, there will be more opportunity for involvement. Negative or deficit research on parent involvement does not take into account the different ways in which non-English speakers are active with their children and in their communities. It is possible to look beyond the six types of involvement that Epstein discusses as her idea of what parental involvement should look like.

The How People Learn framework should also be examined in a different light, calling into question who makes the decisions on what people learn and the methods in

which students “should” learn. What is effective for some students may not work for others, as well as how and why. This can also be applied to how immigrant parents learn and what effective ways of learning could look like for them. This is also important when considering parent workshops, adult literacy courses, and meetings with school officials. Creating a space where parents of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds can participate should be the goal for increasing parent involvement and improving academic achievement.

### Summary

English Language Learners have had a difficult time defining a place for themselves in the American education system. The history of bilingual education and English as a Second Language has allowed us to understand that it has not been an easy transition to the present day. While some frameworks and strategies have proven effective models for academic success they often do not take into account cultural differences. Much of the literature portrays immigrant families in a negative light; however, such misunderstandings have neglected the cultural wealth that many communities possess but that educators and schools have not tapped into because of such negative perceptions. It is critical to re-frame these educational concepts so that they include the current population of school, family, and communities of all languages and cultural backgrounds. Parental involvement for immigrant families will allow a dialogue to take place and improve the relationships among teachers, parents, and students for greater academic success and future opportunities.

### Chapter III: The Project and its Development

#### Description of the Project

This project was created as a workshop and handbook guide for parents of English Language Learner Students. Spanish-speaking educators will lead a 60-minute session, which breaks down the handbook and its goals for parents. The handbook is broken down by its main goals and what it hopes to accomplish in the time allocated. The first goal is to address current state standards for English language development in the classroom and to help parents understand where their child stands academically. Once the parent is able to understand what is expected of their child in the classroom, they will be able to see where their child excels and/or needs improvement. The second goal is to discuss the classroom expectations and what the teacher wants to see from the student and parent daily. This goal focuses on the efforts of the parent and family in order to help the student achieve academic success as a second language learner. This includes daily reading and homework help, establishing a homework helper in the family who is able to assist the child after school, and keeping track of their child's weekly progress. Lastly, the third goal is to introduce ideas that build better relationships with the school, teachers, community, and family. Through this development, parents will learn how to be more involved and become an active participant in their child's education. This will focus on Spanish speaking communities and families who work long hours. Finally, information

about agencies and programs will be provided to help families connect with their community by taking advantage of free educational resources.

### Development of the Project

The project was developed after spending some time volunteering in an afterschool program for English Language Learners in the Mission District of San Francisco, California. During my time at the after-school program, I witnessed a variety of problems that prevented students from academic improvement in ELL classrooms. With a large non-English speaking base, parents were unable to communicate with the teachers about how their child was performing in the classroom. Many of the students were not doing their assigned homework at home and parents were unaware of their child's academic levels and struggles. The lack of communication between the parent and teacher severely impacted the outcome of their child's academic achievement and many of these students were unable to move into the next grade. While many of the parents work long hours and do not have time to sit down with their child when they would arrive home from school, no one was making sure their assignments and reading were being completed. The after school program did its best to communicate with whoever would pick up the child when the day was over, but the lack of communication and involvement deeply impacted the students' academic success.

After witnessing the lack of communication between the parents, school, and student, I wanted to create a workshop that would allow parents to dedicate 90 minutes to exploring ways they can play an active role in their child's education. While many of the parents have limited time at home and do not speak English, I wanted to find just one

session during beginning of the school year where they could actively communicate with other parents like them, create a dialogue among the community, and identify alternatives for parents who may have a language barrier or lack of time in the home. The final outcome of the project is to create a tool that will help with ESL students and parents by encouraging parent involvement in the classroom, at home, and in the community. Providing specific information that influences the parent to become a more active participant in their child's education will open up more opportunities for academic achievement for their child. The hope is to create a consistent dialogue between a family member and educators, and perhaps other parents in the school. Additional resources in the community will also encourage parents to play an active role in their child's educational process.

## The Project

**Increasing Parent Involvement:  
Focusing on Parents of Elementary  
ESL students  
Workshop**



This workshop is based on a general elementary ESL classroom. Teacher's expectations may vary. For the sake of this workshop, we will be using an example of what one teacher may expect from their students and parents. A bilingual educator will be presenting in Spanish for parents who do not speak English. State standards are taken from the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade expectations. For further reading on California State Standards please visit California Common Core State Standards at:  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/finalelaccsstandards.pdf>.

**Workshop: Increasing Parent Involvement in Elementary ESL Classrooms**

Grade Level: K-5

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Materials:**

- Summary of State Standards Handout
- Teacher Expectations sheet
- Paper and pen
- Student folder

**Objectives:**

- Address current state standards
- Address individual child's needs
- Discuss and understand classroom expectations
- Understand what is expected of the parent
- Introduce ideas to build a better parent/teacher/student relationship
- Encourage Parent Involvement through the school and community
- Open up room for dialogue

**Opening:** (Ten minutes)

Begin by introducing the workshop and highlighting the main goal: encouraging parents to play an active role in their child's education.

Emphasize the importance of their attendance and acknowledge the time restraints that many parents face when working long hours.

Provide paper and pen to each parent so they are able to write their name and exchange contact information with other parents in the room. Encourage communication among parents so that they can connect with one another throughout the school year.

Send around another sheet so that you can take attendance of each parent and their contact information.

Once everyone has attempted to exchange information bring the group together by asking some questions.

- What challenges have they faced in connecting with teachers?

- Do you know how your child is doing academically?
- What would you like to improve in as a parent?
- What are some ways the school can help to improve your child's academic success?
- Do you know what is expected of you as a parent?
- Do you know what is expected of your child in the classroom?

Allow additional time if parents begin a conversation about their concerns. After 5 minutes, move on to the first goal. If more time is left over at the end of the workshop follow up with more comments from warm up questions.

**Goal 1: Introduce California State Standards and address their child's academic needs for the school year.**  
(20 minutes)

Introduce standards, and briefly explain how students learn these goals in the classroom.

California State Standards (for 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)

**Reading Standards**

- *Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.*
- *Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.*

**Writing Standards**

- *Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.*
- *With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.*

**Speaking and Listening**

- *Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media*
- *Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.*

**Language**

*-Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.*

*a. Use collective nouns (e.g., group).*

*b. Form and use frequently occurring irregular plural nouns (e.g., feet, children, teeth, mice, fish).*

*c. Use reflexive pronouns (e.g., myself, ourselves).*

*d. Form and use the past tense of frequently occurring irregular verbs (e.g., sat, hid, told).*

*e. Use adjectives and adverbs, and choose between them depending on what is to be modified.*

*f. Produce, expand, and rearrange complete simple and compound sentences (e.g., The boy watched the movie; The little boy watched the movie; The action movie was watched by the boy).*

*-Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe (e.g., When other kids are happy that makes me happy).*

Source Referenced: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/finaleslaccsstandards.pdf>

**Discussion:**

- Students learn these common core standards through the practice of speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are improved through homework. Parents are expected to assist their child with assigned daily reading and writing to make sure that they are at their grade level.
- Understand where your child may need more help and seek information from the teacher on how to improve.
- Ask questions about your child, where they might need more help or where they are excelling. Many educators are Spanish speakers. They encourage your participation.

**Goal 2: Understand Classroom Expectations and Provide Examples for Active Participation**

(10-15 minutes)

**What Teachers Expect from Parents:**

- Read with child 15-20 minutes daily
- Allow child to explain what the story is about
- Engage with child about what they learn in the classroom, ask questions.
- Look over written homework and sign off when completed
- Sign reading packet daily and read notes from teacher
- If parent is unable to read or speak English, appoint another family member to help or inquire within after school program for homework assistance
- Play and active role in the classroom, before or after school as well.

### **How to be An Active Parent**

- Become familiar with Spanish speaking educators (identify of teachers, staff, and after school personnel who are able to discuss their child's academic needs)
- Build a relationship with your child's teacher and ask questions to find out more about your child's academic levels.
- Check in with the teacher at least once a month to focus on where your child may need help.
- Spend some time at the school: if you are able to stay in the morning when you drop off your child, spend some time talking with other parents and educators, staying up to date with school activities.
- After school discussions with teachers and parents are important to learn about your child's academic needs
- Volunteer for classroom activities or school events when possible
- If you are unable to spend time at the school, appoint a family member who can spend sometime at the school
- Communicate with other parents about upcoming events and opportunities for participation.

*Open up the room for discussion. Allow parents to discuss barriers they face when trying to play a more active role in the school and provide suggestions. Encourage dialogue among parents. Emphasize any participation makes a difference.*

### **Goal 3: Building a Relationship with the School, Family, and Community: Exploring Outside Resources to Encourage Active Participation**

(10 minutes)

(Hand out resource guide with information about community organization)

Each handout will contain the following information:

### **Resource Guide for San Francisco, CA**

**Acción** Latina  
2958 24<sup>th</sup> Street  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
<http://accionlatina.org/>

*Community based cultural arts, media, and civic engagement organization which aims to build empowered communities in San Francisco. Focusing on the arts, they encourage all ages to participate in volunteering, educating, spreading knowledge about the strength of equality and a strong community.*

Jamestown Community Center  
3328 26<sup>th</sup> Street  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
Jamestownsf.org

*Providing a variety of programs including: educational enrichment, academics, sports, youth leadership, and parent programs, Jamestown focuses on helping its community in so many ways. The parent programs are a great resource where Parents come together to discuss issues concerning their families, children, and community. Workshops are also provided for school, child development, gang prevention, and community issues and concerns.*

Instituto Familiar De La Raza, Inc.  
2919 Mission St  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
Ifrsf.org

*This organization provides various programs that focus on the needs on the Chicano/Latino community in San Francisco. The community's children, youth, adults, and families are provided with resources that are traditional, conventional, and contemporary. While the focus is health based, they encourage educational aspects as well with parent support programs.*

La Raza Community Resource Center  
474 Valencia St  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
<http://larazacrc.org/index.php>

*Currently Providing Bilingual Parenting classes that teach parents the curriculum their children are learning in the classroom. This organization provides a variety of services*

*and programs for families in the Mission district and provides a safe space for expression and participation.*

**Adult Literacy Programs:**

Project Read  
San Francisco Public Library  
100 Larkin Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
<http://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=0200002801>

*An English based program that helps beginning English readers practice their literacy skills with a tutor weekly. This program is for individuals wishing to improve reading and writing skills.*

English as a Second Language Program  
San Francisco City College  
Various locations  
San Francisco, CA 94112  
<http://www.ccsf.edu/en/educational-programs/school-and-departments/school-of-international-education-and-esl/english-as-a-second-language-esl.html>

*San Francisco City College offers free ESL classes for individuals wanting to learn English. All ages allowed. Classes are a semester long and go up to level 10. This is a great opportunity for anyone wanting to learn English or brush up on literacy skills.*

Review the programs and what they offer, discuss the parent programs and allow for questions. Encourage parents to take advantage of the community resources. Many of the programs provided are safe places for individuals to talk about their struggles as parents and English Language Learners. Sometimes the organizations allow for parents to seek help outside of the school where they feel more comfortable. Highlight the educational programs for parents and suggest Literacy courses for those in the family who would like to learn English or improve.

**Discussion and questions:**

How do we build better relationships with the school and community?

How will this improve my child's education?

What do you need as a parent to help your child?

**Overview: Wrap up and highlights**  
(5 minutes)

Discussion with group:

- Make sure you are aware of your child's academic needs and where they need help
- Dedicate some time to the classroom, whether it is 20 minutes a week, try to play an active role in communicating with educators about your child's progress
- If you are unavailable, designate a family member who is able to help out
- Make sure your child is completing their homework daily and ask questions to make sure they understand the material
- Get involved with other parents to stay connected
- Take advantage of free community resources

Discuss whether or not parents would like to continue workshops and what information they would like to learn for the future

Write down suggestions and notes for improvement

Create an online conversation among those who attended and exchange emails so that parents have a way to connect with one another.

Reflect on what was effective for the workshop and where parents found things interesting. Share your findings with other educators so they are aware of the parents who have participated as a way of parent involvement.



## Chapter IV- Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusion

English Language Learners struggle in the public education system today. Many parents who do not speak English have difficulty connecting with their child as they progress in school. It is important for parents to stay involved in their child's educational process in order to improve their academic abilities. While they may face more barriers than English Speaking parents, it is possible for non-English Speakers to play an active role in their child's education. Providing supplemental resources for parents will allow them to understand how they can help play an active role in the classroom and community. This project aims to discuss the ways in which non-English speaking parents can play an active role despite the language barriers they may face. When parents of this particular group are supplied with the information and tools, they are able to learn what is expected of them.

This workshop aims to give parents the information they need to play an active role in their child's education in various ways. Not only will they learn the California State Standards, they will learn what the teacher expects from them at home and how they can help their child learn in the best possible way. Providing alternatives for parents will allow more flexibility and encourage involvement in any way possible. Utilizing the plethora of resources in San Francisco and the Bay Area, Parents are able to learn outside of the classroom as well. The outcome is to build a strong relationship between the school, family, and community for more successful academic outcomes.

### Recommendations

This workshop is recommended for use in elementary ESL schools, specifically in San Francisco, California or any community with a large Latino population. The function of the workshop would be utilized best in a school where ESL is the primary way of teaching and where parents lack information and resources to help their children. To improve or edit the workshop, notes should be taken to see how parents react to each section of the workshop and what improvements can be made for the future. More organizations can be added to further enrich the resource handout. The key is to create a dialogue among parents to keep them involved in the educational process and make them feel that they are an important part of their child's education.

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