

Conclusion

What did this study reveal?

The excerpts of interviews of parents and school personnel reveal the increasing need for schools, communities, and parents to build positive, more equitable relationships in order to meet the needs of students. The lack of clarity regarding expectations of parents has the potential to create conflict between parents and schools. Parents may feel compelled to comply with the school's mandate, yet feel unsure and ill-informed as to how to meet the school's objectives. And teachers may feel frustrated and unsure as to how to fully involve their students' parents. Collaborative partnerships are ideal and necessary to create congruence between students' home and school lives. A true collaborative partnership requires schools to involve parents in their children's education beyond a superficial level.

How do we move forward to ensure positive connections between immigrant families and schools?

Schools need to acknowledge and respond to the diverse attributes of parents and recognize that all parents possess knowledge that can benefit their children's learning. Schools must also recognize the barriers that prevent family involvement, including race, socioeconomic status, the number of years the parents have been in Canada, their prior school experiences, and their cultural and language proficiency. It is essential for schools to inform parents about the school, how it functions, and to maintain a continual dialogue with families that support them in their efforts to participate in their children's schooling. Parents need to seek ways that enable and empower them to advocate on their children's behalf and to communicate with the school.

What did we learn about immigrant families?

While the parents in this video had many similar experiences, there were unique differences based on their culture, religion, and socioeconomic statuses. It is important for schools to recognize these differences, as family involvement becomes ineffective when teachers adopt the same strategies for promoting family involvement irrespective of socioeconomic status, parental needs, and individual differences. By not taking account of differences, the school remains inaccessible to some families and runs the risk of excluding parents.

Who is responsible for building more equitable relationships?

We found that all families cared deeply about their children and wanted to do whatever they could to ensure their success in Canadian schools. However, many parents expressed a need to learn more about the education system to be able to

become more actively involved in their children's education at home and at school. Parents in this video spoke honestly and directly about their experiences with the Canadian education system and with their children's schools. Some of their experiences revealed their frustration, anger, and resentment. Yet, overall, the school personnel and families in this video series expressed a sincere desire to work towards collaborative partnerships and indicated an eagerness to communicate with one another so that past mistakes would not be repeated. Our many conversations with educators and parents revealed that it is the combined responsibility of the immigrant family and the school to work together to meet the educational needs of their children.

Why are the voices of immigrant families and educators important?

By listening to their stories, we have gained a deeper understanding into the perceptions and experiences of schools and families from low-voice immigrant communities. These stories are relevant and important, and present us with a richer perspective that will enable us to work towards bridging the gap between families and schools. Furthermore, it will help us to create more equitable relationships between families and schools, and to work towards educational change that benefits all learners.