

CONCLUSION

What did this study reveal?

Antoinette Gagne: 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, with parents feeling compelled to comply with the schools mandate, yet unsure and ill-informed as to how to meet the school's objectives, and teachers feeling frustrated and unsure as to how to fully involve their students' parents. Collaborative partnerships are ideal and necessary to create congruence between the students home and school lives. A true collaborative partnership requires schools to involve parents in their child's education beyond a superficial level.

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

Ranya Khan: Schools need to acknowledge and respond to the diverse attributes of parents and recognize that all parents possess knowledge that can benefit their child's learning. Schools must also recognize the barriers that exist in regards to 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 and 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 child's behalf and to communicate with their child's school.

What did we learn about immigrant families?

Sameena Eidoo: While the parents in this video had many similar experiences, there were unique differences based on their culture, religion, and socioeconomic status. 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?

Antoinette Gagne: 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 become more actively involved in their child'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 reveal their frustration anger and resentment, yet overall the school personnel and families in this video series expressed a sincere desire to work toward 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?

Antoinette Gagne: 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 to present us with a richer perspective that will enable us to work towards bridging the gap between families and schools, creating more equitable relationships between families and schools, and helping us work towards educational change that benefits all learners.

<http://eslinfusion.oise.utoronto.ca/stories.asp>

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Antoinette Gagne: We welcome your feedback, and encourage you to contact us, either at the email address or the full postal address on the screen.

Ranya Khan: If you have any relevant materials regarding how to build equitable relationships between immigrant parents and schools, please post them to the address on the screen.

Sameena Eidoo: If you have your own story to share about how you built an equitable relationship between your school or a family in your school, please post your stories to the address you see on the screen.

Antoinette Gagne: We thank you for taking the time to find out more about building equitable relationships between immigrant parents and their schools.

This video project is part of the ESL Infusion Initiative and related research project directed by Antoinette Gagne. Funding for this project came in part from an OISE/UT School University Partnership Grant and in part from a Canadian Heritage Grant.

