

1. INTRODUCTION

Antoinette Gagné: Professor OISE/UT: Hello, my name is Antoinette Gagné and I'm a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education I'm also the coordinator of the ESL Infusion Initiative and the lead researcher on a project funded by the Canadian Heritage investigating how to build relationships between immigrant families and schools.

Ranya Khan: Doctoral Student OISE/UT: Hello, I'm Ranya Khan. I'm a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I'm specializing in second language education and comparative international development education. I'm a researcher on this project.

Sameena Eidoo: Doctoral Student OISE/UT: Hello, I'm Sameena Eidoo, I'm a doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education specializing in curriculum and comparative international development education. I'm a project coordinator on this project.

Why Build Relationships Between the School and the Immigrant Family?

Antoinette Gagné: Involving families in their child's education is considered essential for successful schooling. Family involvement initiatives can be demanding for both schools and families, yet the benefits of successful programs make such initiatives worthwhile. Research shows that when parents are involved in their child's schooling, the child's academic achievement improves, absenteeism is reduced, teacher efficacy improves, and children are more confident and better behaved. Successful family involvement programs provide the link between the home and school that's essential to the growth and development of children, and enables schools to work with families and communities towards a shared goal on behalf of learners.

What challenges do immigrant families face in becoming involved in a child's education?

Sameena Eidoo: Not all types of involvement lead directly or quickly to achievement gains for students and not all types of involvement are feasible or possible for all parents, particularly for newcomer, immigrant or refugee parents who are not able to participate in all activities so soon after their arrival to a new environment and may be unaware as to how to develop a relationship with their child's schools. Schools and teachers need to have clear and realistic expectations of the level of involvement that different parents are able to engage in and recognize time constraints and resources that are at the parent's disposal.

What is this video project all about?

Antoinette Gagné: To gain insight into the communication barriers that exist between Ontario schools and immigrant and refugee families. A team of researchers funded by Canadian Heritage conducted a series of focus group interviews to examine the relationship between the immigrant and refugee families in Toronto and Toronto teachers, principals and settlement workers who work with these communities. This video series describes the experiences of families from selected immigrant and refugee communities, including: the Mandarin Speaking Community; the Russian Speaking Community; the Somali Speaking Community; the Urdu Speaking

Community; the Arabic Speaking Community; and the Caribbean Community. These groups were chosen because they have been identified as low-voice immigrant communities. Low-voice immigrant communities refers to communities in Toronto that have fewer institutional structures, have a greater need, and are made up of more recent arrivals.

Sameena Eidoo: This video is divided into 6 sections: Language; Cultural Understanding; Communication; Relationship Building; The Role of Schools and Families; and Information for Families and Caregivers. Each section will provide insight into the experiences, views and issues that are unique to the various low-voice immigrant and refugee communities featured in this series. Each section will also provide information as to how schools and communities can work together to remove the barriers that hinder education and promote inclusive practices that encourage families to become involved in their child's education.