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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidelines for developing and implementing structured parent/community involvement programs in bilingual education and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in local school districts. Section One concerns the assessment of school, parent, and community needs; this section contains suggestions for data collection as well as sample survey instruments. Section Two addresses the design of goals, objectives, and activities for the parent/community involvement program to be implemented. Section Three deals with the monitoring and evaluation of such programs. Appended to the handbook are (A) profiles of Ohio parent/community involvement programs in Cincinnati, Kettering, and Youngstown, and (B) a list of resource agencies and school districts in the State with similar programs. (GC)

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# A MANUAL FOR ENCOURAGING PARENT - COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

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**A. MANUAL FOR ENCOURAGING PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN  
BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)  
PROGRAMS**

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) programs is to provide the supplementary educational services needed by limited English proficient (LEP) students to acquire the English language skills necessary for success in school. In Ohio, an estimated 8,000 LEP students have been identified as eligible for supplementary educational services in the form of bilingual or ESL instruction. These services are funded under programs such as Title VII, Bilingual Education, the Transition Program for Refugee Children, Chapter I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the Ohio Disadvantaged Pupil Program Funds (DPPF), or locally through the school district's general funds.

Although the main focus of bilingual or ESL programs is on providing students with the assistance they need to make a successful transition into all English classroom settings in all subject areas, personnel in Ohio's bilingual and ESL programs also realize that encouraging parent and community involvement in the program enhances student academic achievement. Several Ohio school districts that receive Title VII funds have developed programs within the bilingual or ESL programs specifically for the benefit of the LEP students' parents. Furthermore, all Title VII funded school districts are required by law to establish parent advisory councils (PAC's) to assist school personnel in the planning, operation, and evaluation of the Title VII program.

However, it is apparent that legal mandates alone do not guarantee that parents and community members will be involved effectively in the bilingual or ESL programs serving their children. In fact, very often, PAC's are viewed with suspicion by school officials and staff. "If the law did not require it, they would not have Councils at all. They either view a PAC as an inconvenience and a nuisance, or they conjure up fears about the potential for the Council to challenge their authority or to 'meddle' in school affairs." On the other hand, school officials and staff sometimes complain that the parents of LEP students show little concern for their children's educational progress because they seem reluctant to participate in school activities or because they do not inquire about their children's progress in school.

Many of these difficulties are obviously due to lack of understanding and information on the part of both school personnel

and LEP students' parents. For this reason, it is particularly important that the school provide leadership in bridging the gap between the home and the school. This is especially necessary with LEP students who have cultures, traditions, and languages which differ from the English-speaking majority group.

Evidence has shown that not only do parents and students benefit from participation in the school's activities, but also the school profits by the public support that such participation generates.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, there is evidence that active parent involvement in the academic progress of their children contributes to high academic achievement.

Parent and community involvement programs involve such activities as teaching parents to speak English or utilizing them as volunteer tutors or classroom aides. Sometimes, parents can even serve as PAC members and assist in the planning, operation, and evaluation of the language program. However, although many districts tailor their parent-community programs to suit their individual needs, there appears to be a lack of systematic approaches that could be replicated in other educational settings. The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidelines for developing and implementing structured parent-community involvement programs which could be applicable to school districts in a variety of settings. The guidelines will include the following:

1. assessment of the needs of the school, parents, community members, and students
2. the design of goals, objectives, and activities for the program
3. strategies for evaluating the program's effectiveness

#### INTENDED AUDIENCE

This publication will be useful to bilingual or ESL program directors, building principals, ESL or bilingual teachers or tutors, classroom teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, and other school staff who work with LEP students. In addition, parents of LEP students, members of the LEP community, as well as members of the English speaking community will benefit from the information included in this handbook.



## SECTION ONE

### ASSESSING SCHOOL, PARENT, AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

As a public system, the school has a unique and vital role to play in insuring that equal educational opportunity is insured for limited English proficient (LEP) students. Schools also serve their own interests when the community and parents are supportive of their efforts. The acceptance of parent and community involvement as an integral part of a bilingual or ESL program provides a unique opportunity to insure equal educational opportunity for students and to generate public support for the school's efforts.

In an attempt to promote parent and community involvement in bilingual education programs as a means of enhancing the academic achievement of LEP students, districts receiving Title VII, Bilingual Education funds are required to establish parent advisory councils (PAC's) to assist in the planning, operation, and evaluation of Title VII programs. The federal government has further confirmed the importance of parent involvement by allowing districts receiving funds under the Transition Program for Refugee Children to use up to 15 percent of their money for parent education activities.

However, despite efforts by many school districts to provide opportunities for parent and community participation in bilingual and ESL programs, parents often fail to participate actively in school activities. In addition, conflicts may arise between parents, community members, and school officials. Many of these conflicts appear to be rooted in lack of cross-cultural awareness on the part of school personnel and insufficient communication between the school, parents of LEP students, and members of the LEP community. These two factors also influence the extent to which schools are able to develop and implement structured parent and community involvement programs.

Since the school can take a leadership role in encouraging parent and community involvement in bilingual education and ESL programs, a first step is to create a climate that is conducive to enlisting parent and community volunteers in the school's activities. 3 This is especially important when dealing with language minority students since cultural and linguistic barriers often cause misunderstanding between the school, parents, and members of the community.



The school has a responsibility to reflect the needs of the community in which it is located and to gain the support of the community it serves. However, too often, schools enrolling significant numbers of LEP students have managed to operate programs which claim to serve LEP students but which have a minimum input from the parental and community centers. In order to remove barriers caused by lack of trust, and limited information about the cultures and traditions of the LEP population, school district personnel need to demonstrate commitment to the belief that parent and community involvement has positive effects on student achievement in school.

Teachers, principals, administrators, and tutors first need to determine what their own attitudes are towards involving parents and community members in the education of LEP students. Second, they need to determine what are the areas of greatest concern for parents and community members. Third, they need to determine which areas are most appropriate for parent and community involvement.

#### ASSESSING ATTITUDES

There are two main areas that should be addressed by school personnel in assessing their attitudes toward parent and community involvement in bilingual education or ESL programs: (1) attitudes toward LEP students' cultural and linguistic differences and (2) expectations of LEP students' parents with regard to their input into the education of their children.

In terms of the first area, school personnel need to be aware of the special problems faced by language minority students because of language and cultural differences. For example, a regular classroom teacher might not be aware that in Asian cultures a student might smile if he or she is embarrassed, not because he or she is amused. Similarly, many Asian female students feel uncomfortable when they are made to work together in groups with male students. Even though students may seem to be fitting into American culture, differences will become evident from time to time. Older LEP students in particular, may feel alienated from the new culture and this will be compounded by language barriers. School personnel should therefore strive to be open to LEP students' culture and to be aware of areas of potential language and cultural conflict.

School personnel also need to assess their expectations of parents as partners in their children's education. Many LEP students also come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, if they are new arrivals in the country, families may tend to be withdrawn and reluctant to participate openly in school activities. Cultural factors can also play a part

in preventing LEP parents from communicating with school personnel. For example, many Asians hesitate to question the services being provided to their children because in Asian countries, educational institutions and educators command high respect. Consequently, it would be considered improper to challenge the expertise of school professionals and to dispute the schools's policies and treatment of students.

Nevertheless, school personnel can play an important part in building trust and encouraging openness among parents. It has been suggested that many LEP parents are very responsive toward school staff who are viewed as supportive and who try to overcome language barriers.

Some of the specific issues that may be addressed in assessing attitudes of school personnel include the following:

1. How are the LEP students' language and culture perceived: as a disadvantage or as a strength on which the school can use to help them achieve their full potential?
2. Are opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges encouraged or is American culture portrayed as "right" while the LEP students' cultures are considered "wrong"?
3. Are opportunities for formal (a newsletter translated into the parents' languages for example) and informal contact with parents and community members available to promote an exchange of information between parents, the community, and the school?
4. Is parent and community involvement viewed as a "necessary evil" rather than as an activity that should be vigorously pursued?

These questions do not exhaust the list of possible areas for assessment. Each district will have to address those attitudes that seem to fit its circumstances. However, in order to promote cross-cultural understanding and to reduce the gap between the school's values and those of LEP students, it is very important that school personnel perform this

initial soul searching to help identify the school's strengths and weaknesses in promoting parent and community participation.

### ASSESSING PARENT AND COMMUNITY CONCERNS

The purpose of conducting a needs assessment prior to developing and implementing a parent-community involvement program is to insure that the program addresses the wishes, concerns, and desires of the individuals it is intended to serve. Some parent-community involvement programs give little attention to parents' needs or to resources available in the district. A needs assessment will insure that the program serves a real purpose either by satisfying a need for services or by responding to a widespread interest. In other words, a needs assessment will provide district personnel with information on the areas in which parents desire to participate as well as on the number of parents who wish to be involved in school activities.

Typically, parent and community concerns focus on three broad areas: (1) parents' aspirations for their children's education; (2) parent involvement in activities that are appropriate to their resources, expertise, interests, and values; and (3) school appreciation of the fact that parents' linguistic and cultural heritages have positive influences on their children. These areas of concern need to be addressed through a variety of needs assessment procedures such as bilingual parent surveys, home visits, and informal interviews with parents or with community leaders.

**Parent Surveys.** Parent surveys are useful for collecting demographic and socio-cultural information about the ethnic, linguistic, social, cultural, and attitudinal characteristics of the parents in the district. For example, through a parent survey, a profile can be developed of the number of persons in the community that are from language minority backgrounds, their levels of education, language spoken, family relationships, recreational habits, rituals or customs they observe, communication channels, group affiliations, and decision-making mechanisms. Parent surveys ideally should be sent out to homes in the district at the beginning of the school year and should be translated into the languages the parents speak. For an example of some of the information that might be solicited through a parent survey see Sample 1.

**Home Visits.** Home visits are an effective method of obtaining information from parents on their perceived needs, their children's needs and their concerns about the school. Home visits can usually be arranged if the district has the resources to employ a home-school liaison or home-school coordinator. In the absence of a home-school liaison, it may be possible to enlist the assistance of willing teachers to conduct home visits. Teachers may be bilingual, but if they are not, they should be accompanied by a bilingual aide, an interpreter, or a bilingual volunteer.

Home visits enable school personnel to have face-to-face conversations with parents and they serve as an effective vehicle for getting school staff and parents to interact on a personal basis. School personnel are generally more likely to take an interest in children whose families they know or have met. Also, by visiting the homes of parents from a different cultural or linguistic background, school staff can help overcome the reluctance that parents might feel about contacting the school. Home visits have a further advantage in that they can be used to solicit the input and participation of pre-literate parents.

**Informal Interviews.** Informal interviews can be conducted with parents or with community members who wield influence with the language minority groups in the district. Community or group leaders can often be contacted at public or volunteer agencies by telephone or in person. Often, they can provide information on the communication channels available in the community, how extensively they are used, and which ones are most effective for reaching different groups of people. It should be remembered, however, that different individuals within the same ethnic group will use different channels of communication and one leader or group does not necessarily represent the interests or opinions of the ethnic group as a whole.

Once the desired information from the needs assessment has been collected, the data should be processed using a format that will indicate the following:

1. community characteristics and demographic patterns
2. parent-community concerns and needs
3. potential parent participants
4. parent resources and expertise

It will be time consuming to sort through the many comments and perceptions garnered, but in the long run it will be worthwhile. The assessment will provide not only a sound basis for planning interesting and useful activities, but will also provide critical information for establishing roles for parents in the parent-community program.

SAMPLE I.

PARENT INTEREST SURVEY 4.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

I am asking for your help in order to enrich and enlarge your child's program at school.

Do you have a hobby or interest to share? If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have talent you are willing to share (cooking, sewing, woodworking, music, art, dramatics, other)? If yes, what?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in helping with any of the following?  
\_\_\_\_\_ If so, please check which one(s):

- telephoning       typing       bulletin boards  
 cutting out pictures       library supervision  
 lunchroom supervision       tutoring  
 advisory council

Do you have ideas of other ways in which you would like to become involved in our parent program?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What time(s) would you be able to help us? Please check:

- before school       noon       after school  
 morning       afternoon       other (specify)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are there others in your family or neighborhood who would be interested in helping with this program? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sign as Desired

## SECTION TWO

### DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A STRUCTURED PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

The purpose of this section is to provide guidelines for designing and implementing a parent and community involvement program in a systematic manner. From the needs assessment, valuable information will be available on parent and community needs and resources. The next steps are to match the program design with the needs and resources that have been identified and to implement the planned activities.

The following five (5) areas will form the basis of the program design and implementation:

1. defining and communicating parent and community roles and responsibilities
2. recruiting and selecting participants
3. planning activities based on identified needs and resources
4. providing coordination and ongoing support for the parent and community program
5. training participants and school staff

#### DEFINING AND COMMUNICATING PARENT AND COMMUNITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is important to assure parents that the school is adequately performing its instructional role and that this is perceived to be so by teachers, administrators, and students. If this perception is clearly communicated to parents, conflict will be reduced and the parent-community involvement program will have a better chance of success. School personnel can legitimately indicate from the outset that instruction is primarily the school's responsibility, yet at the same time they can acknowledge that parent involvement is welcomed and encouraged in specific and clearly defined areas.



## **CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

### **Assess Attitudes of School Personnel**

- cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity
- expectations of parents
- attitudes towards parent participation in school activities

### **Assess Parent and Community Needs, Attitudes, and Concerns**

- devise and administer parent survey
- conduct home visits
- make informal contacts with community agencies and community leaders

### **Analyze the Data Collected**

- determine community characteristics
- define needs and concerns
- identify potential parent-community involvement activities
- identify potential participants

**Figure 1: Parent-Community Involvement Needs Assessment**

## **DEFINE AND COMMUNICATE PARENT AND COMMUNITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Define and Organize the Scope and Format of the Parent Involvement Program**

- define the scope of parent participation  
(advisory, coordinating)
- define the format of parent participation  
(ongoing, ad hoc)

### **Inform Parents about the Parent Involvement Program**

- conduct public meetings
- publicize meetings through print media,  
radio, and T.V.
- elect or appoint participants to help  
coordinate the program

### **Develop and State Program Goals**

- define broad program goals and objectives
- define specific areas of need

**Figure 2: Parent-Community Roles and Responsibilities**

**Organizing the Parent-Community Involvement Group.** School administrators should decide in advance what general form they wish the parent-community involvement program to take. For example, Title VII funded bilingual programs are required to have PAC's. The parent program can be administered through a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). Similarly, a special bilingual parent committee could be established to work with the bilingual program in the school. On the other hand, the home-school coordinator might have the primary responsibility for developing the program. Whatever decision is reached on the form of the group, it should be communicated to parents and interested community members, preferably at a public meeting. Potential participants should be notified through a newspaper advertisement or a notice printed in the school newsletter (if there is one) that parents are invited to attend a meeting to discuss potential areas for parent involvement. Naturally, these notices should be translated into the parents' languages. It might also be useful to ask students to notify their parents of the upcoming meeting and to publicize the event on the radio or television. This would be particularly helpful for parents who do not read their native language.

At that meeting, members of a PAC or parent committee could be chosen or the home-school coordinator could solicit parent volunteers to form an advisory group. Members may be appointed or elected depending on the wishes of the group. It is suggested that a committee or council of eight to twelve people be primarily responsible for helping to develop the parent and community involvement program. The majority of these persons should, of course, be parents. However, the home-school coordinator, teachers who work with bilingual children, or community members who represent the interests of the bilingual community may also participate on this committee.

**Developing Program Goals and Objectives.** This group should help to develop policies, goals, objectives, and meeting schedules, and communicate those to school personnel. The school should work closely with the parent group to insure that the program's goals and objectives are consistent with the school district's own policies. Once the coordinator, parent group, and school administrators have agreed on the general scope and objectives of the committee, the next step is to define the specific tasks that parents will be asked to perform as part of the program. For example, school personnel could indicate to parents that they need volunteers to serve as classroom tutors or aides, to transport parents to functions or meetings, to serve as translators, or to assist with any other need that has been identified. A list of areas could be developed by the coordinator and parent committee.

This list should reflect those needs identified in the needs assessment.

### RECRUIT AND SELECT PARTICIPANTS

Parents from language minority backgrounds may need special encouragement to participate in a parent and community involvement program. This is especially true if they have had negative experiences with the school. As previously indicated, all parents should be notified about the formation of the parent committee or group. However, for accomplishing specific tasks such as tutoring or translating, active coordinated recruitment by the parent committee is needed. This group, being representative of the parents themselves has greater opportunity than school staff to interact with parents on a personal basis. If the school has a home-school liaison or home-school coordinator, this person can bear most of the responsibility for contacting parents individually and requesting their participation.

### RECRUIT AND SELECT PARTICIPANTS

#### Contact Potential Participants

- send written invitations to parents
- make personal contact with parents
- screen parents based on enthusiasm, expertise, commitment

Figure 3: Recruit and Select Parent and Community Participants

If the recruiting effort has been successful, it is possible that there may be more potential candidates than activities planned. However, as a general rule, the school should seek to foster the maximum involvement of interested parents. Parents may be screened based on factors such as enthusiasm, availability, and probable skill levels. English-speaking parents can also be recruited since they can be a valuable resource in areas such as teaching ESL. However, it must be remembered that in most cases, parents will need to be trained for whatever activity they perform for the school.

#### PLAN ACTIVITIES BASED ON IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND RESOURCES

Parent and community involvement activities should be planned by the parent committee in conjunction with the school through the home-school liaison. It should be clearly communicated to parents that the purpose of the parent-community involvement program is to help their children succeed in school and to allow them to participate in their children's education. Therefore, the activities planned should provide for more than periodic social interaction. Festive functions can serve as effective icebreakers. However, if the program is limited to bake sales and teas, it might not be perceived as having any importance or any educational value.

Planned activities should include at least one component that has educational significance such as a preschool reading program in which parents are trained to teach their children to read before they go to kindergarten, a volunteer tutoring program for students having difficulty mastering subject content, or a program which allows parents to serve as bilingual resource persons in the classroom or in the library.

**PLAN ACTIVITIES BASED ON IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES**

**Develop a Master Plan of Activities**

- define the nature of activities (social, supportive, political, educational)
- obtain approval from the school board

**Develop a Schedule of Activities**

- coordinate scheduling with other school activities
- develop timelines
- post schedule in a prominent location
- advertise schedule in print media, on radio, or T.V.
- request parent participation on a one-to-one basis

**Figure 4: Plan Parent-Community Activities and Schedules**

**Develop a Master Plan of Activities.** The activities proposed for the program should be based on the needs that have been identified and the resources available. They should then be presented to school administrators and the school board by way of the home-school liaison or program director. Since the school board may have to approve the planned activities, coordinators should assist in developing topics bearing board policy in mind. If activities are proposed that may conflict with school policy, the coordinator or other school official should communicate this to the committee so that the members will know what types of activities are appropriate for the program.

Once the activities are approved, they should be communicated to the entire language minority community in the district. Even though all parents may not wish to participate for various reasons, all parents should be given the opportunity to participate. A schedule of activities should be printed and posted in a prominent location. In addition, the schedule can be published in a school newsletter or, better yet, in a parent newsletter that is translated into the parents' languages. Notices of activities should always be publicized just before the events are due to occur.

A full schedule of activities should be posted in a prominent place. This will allow parents who were reluctant to participate in the beginning or who might have recently moved into the district to offer their assistance at any time during the school year in an area appropriate to their expertise. The schedule can also be used as the basis for assigning parents to different activities. Parents should be asked individually whether they wish to participate in a particular phase of the program before the program is implemented. This courtesy creates a positive impression that coordinators are sensitive to the individual needs and desires of participants.

The following is a list of potential activities in which parents could be involved. However, school districts should always seek to involve parents in the areas of greatest need identified within their boundaries. This list merely serves to indicate potential areas of parent involvement and is not meant to be a prescription for all school districts.



## POTENTIAL AREAS OF PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

**Resource Teachers, Tutors, Classroom Aides.** Parents instruct students (or other parents) in subject content, English as a second language (ESL).

**Transportation.** Parents can transport parents to parent meetings or students on field trips.

**Evaluation.** Parents can be used to collect data from other parents on the success of the parent-community involvement program.

**Planning.** Parents can be utilized to help plan the parent and community involvement program or the bilingual/ESL program as a whole.

**Supervision.** Parents can supervise children on the playground or in the lunchroom at school.

**Fund-Raising.** Parents can raise money to help support school activities such as acquiring audio-visual equipment for the language program, textbooks, sports equipment, or clothing for needy children.

**Direct Assistance.** Parents provide direct services in any needed area such as distributing food or clothing to families, painting a classroom, or repairing equipment.

**Social and Cultural Events.** Parents sponsor or assist in organizing and conducting social and cultural events such as dinners, picnics, and holiday festivities. They may make costumes, prepare food, or make decorations for these occasions.

**Political Support.** Parents write letters to government officials or private organizations concerning policies and programs, or they lobby the school board in support of issues.

**Disseminating Information to Other Parents.** Parents may be in charge of developing and disseminating a multilingual newsletter or magazine to other parents.

2

The above list of activities provides sufficient breadth to insure that most parents will have the expertise to participate in some aspect of the program. Those who do not feel comfortable participating in instructional or political activities can direct their energies toward supportive activities. It would be wise for those planning the program to include a variety of activities in the schedule so that a majority of parents could participate according to their expertise and time constraints. School personnel also need to be sensitive to the fact that some activities (such as a parent committee) will require more extensive commitment than others (such as making a dish for a multicultural dinner). All parents should not be expected to make the same level of commitment to the program. Each parent's circumstance should be viewed individually and parents should not feel pressured to provide services that are beyond their resources.

#### **PROVIDE COORDINATION FOR THE PARENT-COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM**

A program to involve parents and community members in school activities should be coordinated carefully and planned in relationship to other school or district activities. The parent program should be integrated into overall school activities and should not be viewed as a peripheral part of the school's agenda. An invaluable source of coordination is the home-school liaison. Besides spearheading the planning of activities and the recruiting of parent volunteers, the liaison will also be responsible for publicizing activities and for insuring that if parents are assisting with an activity, they know what to do, how many persons to prepare for, and all the other details associated with their participation. The liaison will also organize transportation for parents who need it as well as babysitting or day-care services.

**PROVIDE COORDINATION FOR THE PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM**

**Provide Home-School Liaison Personnel to**

- coordinate planning with parents
- make personal contact with parents
- develop schedule of activities
- act as liaison with school personnel
- organize activities
- provide support services to parents  
-(transportation, child-care)
- maintain a resource file of potential participants
- coordinate training for school staff and parents
- coordinate evaluation of the program

**Figure 5: Coordinate the Parent and Community Involvement Program**

The liaison should make sure that the schedule of activities is not so overloaded that parents will not be able to participate. For example, the entire school or district calendar should be reviewed prior to planning social or cultural activities so that conflicts will be avoided.

The liaison should also be responsible for maintaining a file on parent participants which includes their names, addresses, telephone numbers, and the area(s) in which they wish to participate. (For a sample of the kind of information that should be kept in the file, refer to the Parent Interest Survey, Sample I on Page 9.) This file should also have information on whether the parent works, what his or her schedule is like, and other relevant information. This file can be catalogued by the type of activity or alphabetically by the parents' names. It might be useful to catalogue the file both by topic and by names. If an emergency should arise or if a parent volunteer should cancel an activity at the last moment, the coordinator can use the file as a resource for finding assistance or a replacement.

#### TRAIN PARENT PARTICIPANTS AND SCHOOL STAFF

The success of any parent and community involvement program depends largely on the training that is provided both to school staff and to parents and community members. School staff need training to sensitize them to cross-cultural issues or to prepare them to serve as trainers of parents. Parents will need training before they can conduct evaluations, organize events, plan a schedule of activities, or serve as tutors, supervisors, or aides.

Training may be provided either before the activity begins or during the time that the parents are serving as volunteers.

## **TRAIN PARENTS AND SCHOOL STAFF**

### **Identify Areas of Training for Parents and Staff**

#### **Identify Parent and Staff Participants**

#### **Develop Training Modes and Schedules**

-- topics

-- number of participants

-- timelines

-- training materials and trainers

#### **Provide Feedback for Training Participants**

-- hold regular feedback sessions

-- provide for social and peer interaction during sessions

**Figure 6: Train Parents, School Staff, and Community Members**

School staff members who are training parents should themselves be trained before being required to provide inservice instruction to parents. Training sessions will vary in depth and length of time depending on the activity involved. For example, if parents are supervising children on the playground, a short meeting with them and a handout on strategies for supervising students or on what to do in emergencies will suffice. However, if parents are assisting with an extensive adult literacy program or if they are teaching English to parents, the training required will be more intensive. Whatever the circumstance, the home-school liaison or coordinator should have very clear objectives for the training sessions and these should be clearly communicated to parents.

Training both school staff and parents has several advantages. School staff can learn how to use volunteers more effectively and can learn strategies for making parents feel welcome and valued in the school. At the same time, parents who receive training may feel reassured about their ability to perform a particular task.

The following are some potential areas of training for school staff, the coordinator, parents, and community members.

#### **Areas of Training for Staff and Parents**

##### **Coordinator and School Staff**

- cultural awareness
- recruiting parents
- public relations
- leadership
- school policies
- communication skills
- liaison and coordination techniques
- conflict management

##### **Parents and Community Members**

- leadership skills

- public relations
- skills specific to a given task
- the goals and objectives of bilingual education of ESL programs

Training is one method of maintaining regular communication with parents in a task-oriented setting. Workshops could be held in which parents can clarify expectations and get feedback from school staff about their roles and responsibilities. The coordinator could set up weekly meetings with parent volunteers who are engaged in a specific activity, for example, tutoring in English. If the activity is short-term such as a dinner or picnic, the coordinator should schedule meetings prior to the date of the event and should be sure to acknowledge the assistance provided by the parents publicly. If time and resources permit, individual "thank you" notes should be sent to each parent that participated or to those that did a particularly outstanding job.

To reinforce inservice training, written communication regarding expectations, roles, or tasks for each activity should be sent to parents. Parents will be able to refer to these handouts from time to time if the need arises. Finally, to encourage interaction between parents, school staff, and interested community members, social gatherings can be incorporated into inservice training. For example, a training session on ESL methodology can be conducted using a potluck dinner. If a variety of cultures are represented in the district, school staff and parents will get a chance to be exposed to the food and the customs of others. The potluck will therefore serve several purposes. Not only will it be educational, but it will also be a social and cultural experience.



## SECTION THREE

### MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE PARENT-COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of parent and community involvement programs is the monitoring and evaluation of the program's success in meeting its goals. Parent and community programs involve numerous and mobile participants and monitoring their activities can be a complex task. Also, recently, it has been acknowledged that parents themselves can and should help evaluate all aspects of bilingual programs including instruction, support activities, planning and operation.

#### PROGRAM MONITORING

Proper planning in the initial stages of the program's development is essential to monitoring parent participation effectively. Parents often have priorities that conflict with planned activities, and this should be taken into account when setting goals for participation and selecting potential participants. Activities will need to be scheduled well in advance and flexibility should be exercised in matching parents to tasks and activities. If these ingredients are included in the program design, the coordinator or program director can use simple, but effective techniques for monitoring the program.

Some effective methods for monitoring the parent involvement program include logs of parent volunteers or participants, informal observation by teachers, principals, or the coordinator, interviews with parents to obtain their perceptions, and survey evaluations.

**Logs.** A card file can be maintained on each parent volunteer. This file should indicate when the individuals started work, what type of activity they were assigned, their schedule, and basic information such as name, address, and telephone number. This log will help the coordinator decide whether a volunteer has participated on an intermittent or continuous basis. It might also suggest future roles for that person.

**Informal Observation.** Principals and classroom teachers have the best opportunity to observe parent volunteers who work in libraries, in the classroom, or on the playground. The coordinator also has an excellent chance to observe parent volunteers who work in the school or who help with organizing social and cultural events. The observations of all these persons will be very useful for determining areas in which parents might need more training.

Observation should be viewed as a mechanism for determining parents' strengths and weaknesses and for providing the feedback and assistance needed for improvement. Generally, observation should not be used as a means of screening out parents because a primary goal should be to foster the involvement of all parents who wish to participate.

**Interview.** Classroom teachers or the coordinator should schedule periodic interviews with parent and community volunteers (especially those who act as tutors or aides) to evaluate how well specific tasks are being performed. Immediate feedback should be provided during interviews and special care should be taken to make them as non-threatening as possible. An atmosphere of openness and give-and-take should characterize interviews with parents.

**Surveys.** A written evaluation instrument with pre-determined criteria can be developed and administered to parent volunteers at a specific time. These surveys should be written in the parents' languages and should attempt to solicit their opinions about the parent program, its strengths and weaknesses and ways for making it better. Surveys should not, however, be the sole means of evaluating the program's success. All the techniques mentioned above should be incorporated into the evaluation design in addition to a written survey.

### PARENT PARTICIPATION IN EVALUATION

In a recent article, the Impact Institute's Project Parent Involvement and Evaluation (PIE) indicated that parents make effective evaluators of a bilingual or ESL program. Obviously, this assumes that parents have received adequate training in the goals and objectives of the program and are familiar with legal issues concerning bilingual/ESL instruction, as well as with the basic concepts of bilingual education or ESL programs:

"... the most important reason for promoting the involvement of parents in program evaluation activities relates to the fact that the PIE activities give parents their first, organized approach to the development of value statements related to their child's education. Middle and upper income mainstream-type parents throughout the country are continuously making judgements related to their child's schooling... Minority parents are less inclined to make judgements about the educational process at school and linguistic minority parents are even more disenfranchised from the school setting because they feel they have no background which gives them a right to judge the educational process and limited English skills..."<sup>5</sup>

It is important to stress that in some cases, schools will have to make a concerted effort to encourage parents to become involved in evaluation, since some parents will resist the notion for cultural reasons. However, adequate training must be provided to parents before requiring them to administer a survey, for example. Parents can be trained in developing observation techniques, conducting evaluation interviews with other parents, or writing evaluation findings. As evaluators, parent opinions provide a unique perspective because they are emotionally involved and may identify areas that educators miss. One obvious advantage of having parents help to evaluate the program is that they will publicize its successes and generate public support for the school.

#### PROGRAM COORDINATION EVALUATION

The overall bilingual education program and the parent-community program, in particular, should be evaluated. Most bilingual or ESL programs are required to submit annual progress reports to funding sources such as the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education, which provides funds under Title VII, and the Transition Program for Refugee Children. Similarly, state funded programs such as DPPF also require school districts to submit annual reports. However, in addition to these formal documents, coordinators of bilingual programs should collect data that can be presented to the school board or superintendent to document the program's successes and justify requests for funding.

Surveys, logs, and written assessments are useful methods for collecting data. These should be compiled in such a way that they can be easily understood and presented in the form of a report to persons who desire the information. For an example of how to maintain a record of parent participation, see Sample II. However, it should be stressed that ongoing monitoring is a primary function of the coordinator. In preparing final or quarterly reports, the coordinator should be up to date on the status of timelines and schedules so that major revisions or last minute problems can be avoided.

### EXTERNAL CONSULTANT EVALUATION

An external consultant who is skilled in program evaluation techniques can be contracted to review a program's operations and to make recommendations. Many school districts utilize consultant expertise in conducting their final annual evaluation. However, it might also be useful to bring in a consultant midway through the year to review the program's operation and to make recommendations for improvement before the year ends. Consultants should at that time be able to view actual operations and naturally, should have access to all files and documents.

SAMPLE II: EVALUATION OF PARENT PARTICIPATION: RECORDING FORM

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INVOLVING PARENTS IN:

SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

% Parents Participating	0	50%	100%				
# Activities	0	5	10				
Impacts: Parents	1	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0
Impacts: Teachers	1	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0

PARENT EDUCATION

% Parents Participating	0	50%	100%				
% Targeted	0	50%	100%				
Impacts: Parents	1	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0

HOME-BASED INSTRUCTION

% Parents Participating	0	50%	100%				
Impacts: Parents	1	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0
Impacts: Teachers	1	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0

INSTRUCTION AT SCHOOL

% Classrooms	0	50%	100%				
% Time on Instruction	0	50%	100%				
% Planning Instruction	0	50%	100%				
% Regular	0	50%	100%				
Impacts: Parents	1	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0
Impacts: Teachers	1	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0

ADVISORY GROUPS

Role: Curriculum	No Involvement	Inform Only	Minor Role	Major Role
Role: Budget	No Involvement	Inform Only	Minor Role	Major Role
Role: Personnel	No Involvement	Inform Only	Minor Role	Major Role
Role: Parent Activities	No Involvement	Inform Only	Minor Role	Major Role

## SUMMARY

The intent of this publication was to provide guidelines for designing and implementing structured parent and community involvement in bilingual education and ESL programs. Strategies were provided for assessing school attitudes, parent needs and concerns; developing and implementing the program; and evaluating its effectiveness.

However, it must be noted that at the root of any successful parent involvement program lies the belief that language minority parents should be as involved in their children's education as the language majority population. It is therefore crucial that the school take the leadership role in nurturing parent involvement among members of the language minority population:

"... All parents will get involved in school activities if there is a crisis. The trick is to get them involved in order that their voices band together in support of bilingual education, ESL activities, and other student services before a crisis arises. Ongoing activities that are personally rewarding will keep parents involved and on hand to prevent crises and get other parents involved..." 7.

**APPENDIX A: PROFILE OF OHIO PARENT-COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS**

**CINCINNATI CITY SCHOOLS**

The Cincinnati City Schools, located in one of Ohio's major cities, enrolls over 100 limited English proficient (LEP) students per year. The majority of Cincinnati's LEP students are Indochinese refugees who have recently arrived in the United States.

The district receives funding through its general funds, under the Transition Program for Refugee Children, and through Title VII Bilingual Education. It has successfully implemented an extensive and multifaceted parent training program. The training program has several strands: a support component, an evaluation and observation aspect, and a cultural component.

Essentially, the district has a parent advisory council which acts in a facilitating role. However, parents also attend bi-monthly tutorials at which they have the opportunity to express their concerns and to discuss issues of interest to them. Training needs were assessed through informal contact with parents, group assessment, and input from the advisory council. Meetings are publicized through a trilingual newsletter that is disseminated to parents, through notices that are sent home with students, and through home visits made by the resource teacher.

Some of the areas that have been addressed through tutorials include the goals and objectives of the program and of bilingual education/ESL programs in general, simple techniques for increasing reading readiness, health education, and cultural awareness. Support activities in which parents are engaged include developing and reviewing cultural materials, developing a parent training manual, and assisting with tutoring.

In an effort to involve parents in evaluating the program, the district encourages them to visit school sites and observe classroom practices throughout the year. Tutorial sessions also serve as an ongoing medium whereby parents can express their opinions and discuss concerns.



For further information, contact

Dr. Myriam Met, Director  
Cincinnati City Schools Language Program  
230 East Ninth Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202  
(513) 369-4999

### KETTERING CITY SCHOOLS

The Kettering City Schools located in the Ohio suburb of Kettering enrolls an average of 25-30 limited English proficient (LEP) students per school year. Many of Kettering's LEP students are Asian.

To address the students' limited English proficiency, one-to-one tutoring is provided to them and to their relatives by native English speaking volunteers drawn from the Kettering community. The volunteers are recruited through notices published in the district superintendent's newsletter and through personal contact.

Tutors receive fifteen hours each of intensive training in using the LAUBACH ESOL materials which form the basis of the ESL program. Training of volunteers is conducted by experienced school staff and a LAUBACH consultant.

Volunteers are selected based on their enthusiasm, availability, and commitment. However, 80 percent of the Kettering volunteers have college degrees, while 50 percent are former teachers. All give their time for at least two sessions a week to provide one-to-one tutoring on a pull-out basis to LEP students.

The volunteers' performance is observed by the program director on an ongoing basis. Principals and classroom teachers also assist in observing the volunteers and the program director conducts interviews with individual students to determine the effectiveness of the tutoring. A reading test administered once per year is an additional source of information on the program's effectiveness.

For further information, contact

Mr. Richard Bolan  
Kettering City Schools  
3490 Farhills Avenue  
Kettering, Ohio 45429  
(513) 296-7642

### YOUNGSTOWN CITY SCHOOLS

The purpose of the Youngstown City Schools' Bilingual Education Parent Involvement Program is to encourage parents of the LEP students to participate actively in all aspects of their children's education. Specific objectives are as follows:

1. To inform the parents about the objectives and activities of the bilingual program.
2. To inform parents about the progress of their children in the program.
3. To involve parents in the planning and evaluation of the program.
4. To organize a parent advisory committee to provide recommendations on program development.
5. To promote community involvement and input into school policies, practices, and programs.
6. To maintain contact between school staff, community organizations, and parents.
7. To assist the project director in communicating with community organizations and parents.
8. To identify community resources which can be utilized to improve the bilingual program.

Parents meet monthly with the parent-teacher liaison in their neighborhood schools to discuss the Title VII proposal, discipline problems, community services, parent-teacher conferences, grades, ESL classes for parents, drug and alcohol abuse, and employment. Community resource persons are brought in to discuss the various topics. All talks and handouts are translated into the parents' native language. Transportation is arranged, if necessary, through car pools. Seventy-three percent of the students' parents in the Title VII program attend the monthly meetings regularly.

The drug and alcohol abuse workshop has been so successful, that the parents meet weekly at the Hispanic Social Agency, and they plan to continue meeting throughout the summer. They meet with members of the local drug and alcohol clinic and local police officers to determine the steps they can take to reduce this serious problem in the community.

The parent-teacher liaison also meets with each parent, and together they meet with the children's teachers. As a group, plans are made for the education of the student with regard to grades, attendance, behavior, and future employment. Because parents are involved in the actual planning of their child's education, they hold an even greater stake in the outcome.

The bilingual program in Youngstown uses the total student approach to education by involving the parents, teachers, students, and community in the educational process.

For further information, contact

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Bilingual Program  
Youngstown City Schools  
20 West Wood Street  
P.O. Box 550  
Youngstown, Ohio 44501  
(216) 743-1151

**APPENDIX B:**

**PARENT AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

**AGENCIES**

**Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association**  
65 South Fourth Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Contact: Vanna Strinko, Director

**Catholic Migration and Refugee Resettlement**  
197 East Gay Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Contact: John Litzinger (614) 228-1121

**Church World Services/  
Ohio Council of Churches**  
89 East Wilson Bridge Road  
Worthington, Ohio 43085  
Contact: Robin Tetzloff (614) 885-9590

**Commission on Spanish Speaking Affairs**  
65 South Front Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Contact: Raul Vega, Sr., Director (614) 466-8333

**Illinois Multifunctional Support Service Center**  
500 South Dwyer  
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60005  
Contact: Hai Trong Tran (312) 870-4143

**LAU Center**  
Division of Equal Educational Opportunities  
Ohio Department of Education  
65 South Front Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Contact: Hazel P. Flowers, Director (614) 466-3318

**Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service**  
57 East Main Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Contact: Jim Smith (614) 228-2740

**National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials  
(NALEO)**

P. O. Box 24266

Washington, D.C. 20024

Contact: Harry Pachon, Executive Director (202) 546-2536

**Ohio Bureau of Employment Services**

395 East Broad Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Contact: Tam Duc Do (614) 461-7102

**Ohio Migrant Education Program**

Division of Federal Assistance

933 High Street

Worthington, Ohio 43085

Contact: Rosendo Rodríguez

**SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

**Cincinnati City Schools**

230 East Ninth Street

Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Contact: Myriam Met, Director (513) 369-4999

**Columbus City Schools**

270 East State Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Contact: Kenneth Woodard (614) 252-4904

**Dayton City Schools**

Louise Troy Structured School

1665 Richley Drive

Dayton, Ohio 45408

Contact: Martha W. Hull, Program Coordinator (513) 222-8904

**Kettering City Schools**

3490 Farhills Drive

Kettering, Ohio 45429

Contact: Richard Bolar (513) 296-7642

**Lorain City Schools**

Bilingual/Bicultural Education

1020 Seventh Street

Lorain, Ohio 44052

Contact: Sylvia Cooper, Coordinator (216) 244-9000

Youngstown City Schools

20 West Wood Street

P.O. Box 550

Youngstown, Ohio 44501

Contact: Debbie Mettee, Coordinator (216) 743-1151

Cleveland City Schools

1380 East Sixth Street

Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Contact: Raymond Negrón, Directing Supervisor (216) 574-8573

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