

Helping Teachers Work Effectively with English Language Learners and Their Families

Cheng-Ting Chen, Diane W. Kyle, and Ellen McIntyre

Abstract

Many classroom teachers across the United States feel unprepared to work with students and families who speak limited or no English. Knowing that schools are accountable for the achievement results of these students, teachers increasingly seek help. This article describes a professional development project designed to introduce K-12 teachers to effective strategies for enhancing the learning of English language learners and shares the results that occurred as the teachers placed greater emphasis on family involvement practices. The Sheltered Instruction and Family Involvement (SIFI) project introduced the teachers to research on the effects of family involvement on students' academic achievement and asked that participants develop plans for involving families more intentionally. Results of the project, documented in survey responses and in evidence shared at a culminating project event, indicated changes in many teachers' views and practices of family involvement. Teachers reached out to families in new ways and made their instruction more connected to students' background knowledge. They also acknowledged the challenges involved. Despite the challenges, however, the professional development experience led to practices that are more likely to help English language learners achieve greater academic success.

Key Words: English Language Learner (ELL), English as a Second Language (ESL), family involvement, sheltered instruction, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), professional development, teacher practices, parents

Introduction

Classroom teachers across the United States face an overwhelming challenge in working with students and families. Teachers have been consistently unprepared to work with immigrants and refugees and others who speak limited or no English (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2002). Add to this the high-stakes accountability of schools which must include the achievement results of these students, and we can understand teachers' requests for help. This article describes an attempt to provide assistance to a group of elementary, middle, and high school teachers who devoted 18 months to learning strategies designed to help this growing population of students and shares the results that occurred as the teachers focused on family involvement practices.

Changing Demographics and Resulting Challenges

Changing student demographics correspondingly raise issues of teacher quality. The increasing number of immigrants from non-English speaking countries makes our schools more ethnically and linguistically diverse. According to U.S. census data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007), 12.54% of the population in 2006 was foreign-born. Further, 19.7% reported speaking a language other than English at home, and 8.7% described themselves as speaking English less than "very well." Moreover, the U.S. Census projected that students whose first language (L1) is not English will represent about 40% of the K-12 student population in the United States by the year 2030 (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

The academic achievement of English Language Learners (ELLs) has continued to lag significantly behind that of their peers. This may be, in part, because their teachers struggle with knowing how to teach them effectively. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics' *Schools and Staffing Survey of 1999-2000* (NCES, 2002), only 12.5% of teachers with ELLs reported having eight or more hours of training in the previous three years on how to teach those students. A recent survey of more than 5,000 teachers in California conducted by Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) reported that "during the last five years, 43% of teachers with 50% or more English learners in their classrooms had received no more than one in-service that focused on the instruction of English learners" (p. 13). Half of the teachers in classrooms in which 25-50% of the students were English language learners had no (or almost no) professional development in working with ELLs.

Compounding the problem, assessment standards have increased as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) demands that these students achieve

as their peers. This expectation heightens the critical need for teachers to know how to provide appropriate instruction for this population of students now present in classrooms across the nation and how to reach out and work effectively with students' families.

Providing Help Through Professional Development

Participants in this study took part in one of two cohorts in an 18-month professional development initiative. The Sheltered Instruction and Family Involvement (SIFI) project focused on helping teachers learn and provide "sheltered instruction" (e.g., strategies designed to help students learn content at the same time they develop English proficiency) to improve the academic achievement of English language learners as well as positive family involvement practices which link to higher achievement for all students.

Participants in the project learned about and implemented the instructional strategies suggested by Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2004) for working with ELLs (data on the implementation of the model is presented elsewhere; see McIntyre, Kyle, & Chen, 2007). The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model is a means for making grade-level academic content accessible to English learners while at the same time promoting their language and literacy development. SIOP includes eight components: preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and review/assessment. Research on the model has indicated that it provides a reliable and valid way to measure sheltered instruction (Guarino et al., 2001). Further research has demonstrated that English learners benefit when their teachers have been trained to use SIOP and implement it with fidelity. In a study reported by Echevarria, Short, and Powers (2006), English language learners in such classrooms not only improved their writing skills, but also outperformed students in control classes of teachers who had not received SIOP training.

In addition to training in the implementation of the SIOP model, the project reflected research which has shown the positive connection between parent involvement and students' academic success (Marcon, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Sanders & Herting, 2000). Teachers learned how to reach out to families in respectful ways and to learn from them (Kyle et al., 2002). The project challenged the deficit view many teachers hold toward parents of poverty, language difference, or low education by showing how to see and build from families' strengths and funds of knowledge (Moll & González, 2004).

Further, the project combined the content of instructional practices shown to be effective with ELLs and family involvement with a powerful model of

professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Tharp & Gallimore, 1993). This model focuses on sociocultural principles for learning (Tharp & Gallimore). Novices and experts worked together to learn about effective strategies, planned appropriate lessons for ELLs, and engaged in reflective dialogue about how to best meet the needs of the target students. Further, other teachers and the leadership team assisted their performance as they made attempts to learn new strategies. As the following reflections by some of the teachers illustrate, they found the approach to professional development beneficial in their growth as teachers of ELLs, specifically, as well as in teaching all learners, in general:

- I love the hands-on strategies presented. I'll be a better teacher starting next week!
- The strategies that were shared today will be beneficial not only to my ELL students but all my students. Best practices in education benefit everyone.
- I now feel more confident, especially planning language objectives.
- Restating content objectives and building language objectives intentionally in lesson plans will help me and improve my students' ability to understand a lot faster – all of my students.

Project Emphasis on Family Involvement

As noted, the project emphasized the positive, respectful, and necessary involvement of families in supporting student learning and academic achievement. More specifically, participants received information about current research reporting the positive effects of parent involvement on students' academic achievement, and they read and discussed books and articles describing practical and proven family involvement strategies to implement in classrooms. The SIFI project also included specific readings and discussions about the value of "family visits" (home visits) as well as guidelines for planning, conducting, and learning from such experiences for those teachers who might want to explore this possibility.

The SIOP component on building background specifically addresses the importance of tapping into the background of unique experiences and knowledge that English language learners bring with them. Echevarria et al. (2004) suggest three indicators of this component for teachers to address in their planning and teaching: "concepts linked to students' background, links between past learning and new learning, and developing key vocabulary" (p. 44). Teachers who understand students' backgrounds of experiences and interests and relate what students need to learn to what they have learned previously are

better able to provide the scaffolding needed by students who are confronting new academic content (and, for many, in a new language as well).

The teachers in the project developed action plans of their intended goals in working with their ELLs, including planned strategies for involving and learning from families more intentionally and more often. Project meetings included time for the teachers to share their efforts and get feedback from their peers. As a culminating event of the project, a “Share Fair” became a time for participants to showcase particularly successful attempts and results. To an audience of visitors invited to the event, the teachers provided tri-fold posters of photos, PowerPoint presentations, examples of projects students and their families developed, and other materials from their work with families.

Methods and Data Sources

The project was conducted with two cohorts of teachers. Twenty classroom teachers and three district level administrators completed Cohort 1, and 15 teachers completed Cohort 2. The teachers taught across all grade levels, K-12. Data sources for the entire project included: observations of teachers’ instruction based on the SIOP rubric, analyzed to determine percentages of implementation of the SIOP components for individuals and across the participants; results of students’ achievement on a literacy assessment in project teachers’ classrooms matched with students in non-project classrooms, analyzed to determine differences in academic growth; and teachers’ open-ended reflections at the end of each session about their perceptions of the professional development, analyzed to determine patterns of views about the sessions and materials, thoughts about implementation of SIOP and family involvement strategies, and concerns (see McIntyre, Kyle, & Chen, 2007 for results of teachers’ instructional changes and students’ achievement).

This article reports on the family involvement data only. In addition to the above data sources, participants completed surveys at the beginning and end of the project about the type and frequency of their parent involvement strategies and activities. At the beginning of the project, the 20 Cohort 1 teachers responded to a survey developed by the project directors, and 18 completed the same survey at the end. For Cohort 2, the project directors used a validated survey about parent involvement developed at Johns Hopkins University (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). Eighteen participants completed the survey at the beginning of the project, and 12 participants completed the survey at the conclusion of the project.

The percentages of responses and narrative comments included on the surveys were analyzed to determine the extent and nature of the involvement

strategies teachers employed and any changes that occurred over the duration of the project. In addition, as noted above, participants presented documentation about their family involvement practices in a culminating Share Fair, and these materials were collected for further analysis.

Changes in Teachers' Views and Practices: Cohort 1

At the beginning of the project, most of the Cohort 1 teachers saw family involvement in traditional ways (e.g., parent conferences, report cards, etc.). Some teachers had made efforts to have positive interactions with families, but few went out of their way to attempt to build trusting relationships with families. For example, the majority of teachers (17 of 20) made positive phone calls to only "0-25% of my students." Further, few teachers attempted to get to know students through the families with 15 of the 20 indicating that they had "asked parents to share positive information about their child" for only "0-25% of my students." And, only 3 out of 20 reported making instructional connections from information learned about the students and their families, with most leaving this section blank on the survey.

There were positive changes in the amount and quality of family involvement during the 2005-06 school year for Cohort 1. Almost half of the 18 teachers for whom we have pre- and post-survey data made positive phone calls to over 50% of their students, and 7 reported that they had "asked parents to share positive information about their child" for "76-100% of my students." Further, 7 provided some kind of response (although brief and not detailed) to the question of how they had made instructional connections from what they had learned. They shared, "In my lessons, I make connections to the students' background, culture, or contemporary issues." "I created some lessons about families which made the students reflect and feel proud of their parents." "[I've used] more cultural activities to align with core content."

While these data indicate percentages of improvement, the teachers also provided specific examples of strategies to involve more families in the work displayed at the culminating Share Fair. Examples include: Latino College Night; weekly newsletters translated for ELL students; middle school preparation event; family journals; multicultural fair; "My Book" bilingual exchange; and "three surveys using the SIOP model to find out how parents feel about school – at the end of the first grading period, first semester, and end of year." One teacher noted, "I started a co-ed competitive soccer team, and 90% of my team are ESL students. Their extended families often come to every game."

Changes in Teachers' Views and Practices: Cohort 2

The Cohort 2 respondents to their survey revealed several insights about working with and involving families from the beginning to the end of the project. In addition, the participants also shared examples and supporting materials at their Share Fair, showcasing their strategies for involving families at school. The sections that follow summarize findings from the survey and describe the varied family involvement initiatives teachers implemented in their elementary, middle, and high school classrooms.

Perspectives About Parent Involvement

Cohort 2 participants at the beginning of the SIFI project generally held positive views about the value of parent involvement and about parents' roles in supporting their child's academic development (see Table 1). Contrasting the rather positive views, however, 67% (12 of 18) of teachers agreed with the statement, "Mostly when I contact parents, it's about problems or trouble." In addition, 33% (6 of 18) of the teachers agreed that "Teachers do not have time to involve parents in very useful ways," and 94% (17 of 18) agreed or strongly agreed that, "Teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices."

At the beginning of the project, then, the teachers perceived the importance of parent involvement, but contact remained focused on concerns about students. Not knowing how to involve parents or having sufficient time seemed to be major constraints the teachers identified in expanding or making changes in their parent involvement strategies.

Table 1. Views About Parent Involvement, Pre-Survey

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Total |
|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Parent involvement is important for a good school. | | | 2 11% | 16 89% | 18 |
| Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students. | | | 2 11% | 16 89% | 18 |
| Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school. | 1 5% | | 7 39% | 10 56% | 18 |
| Parent involvement is important for student success in school. | | | 3 17% | 15 83% | 18 |
| All parents could learn ways to assist their children on school work at home, if shown how. | | | 7 39% | 11 61% | 18 |
| Mostly when I contact parents, it's about problems or trouble. | | 6 33% | 12 67% | | 18 |

At the conclusion of the project, the participants appeared to sustain their initial positive views (see Table 2). Particularly noteworthy, however, was the change in teachers’ self-reports about contacting parents. Only 25% (3 of 12) of the teachers agreed that contacts occurred mostly for discussing concerns about a student. Instead, the majority of the teachers made contacts for a range of reasons which are described below. About 33% (4 of 12) continued to see limited time as a constraint, and the majority still felt a need for further professional development on how to involve parents more effectively.

Table 2. Views About Parent Involvement, Post-Survey

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Total |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------|----------------|-------|
| Parent involvement is important for a good school. | | | 1 8% | 11 92% | 12 |
| Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students. | | | 2 17% | 10 83% | 12 |
| Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school. | | | 5 42% | 7 58% | 12 |
| Parent involvement is important for student success in school. | | | 2 17% | 10 83% | 12 |
| All parents could learn ways to assist their children on school work at home, if shown how. | | | 2 17% | 10 83% | 12 |
| Mostly when I contact parents, it’s about problems or trouble. | 2 17% | 7 58% | 3 25% | | 12 |

If teachers’ contacts with parents expanded for reasons other than sharing concerns, what types of contact occurred? The following section provides data that help to explain this change.

Contacts with Students’ Families

Similar to Cohort 1, the teachers in Cohort 2 also began the project with traditional approaches in their interactions with parents. Mostly this involved sending letters and memos home with the children and depending on parent-teacher conferences to make connections. Only 33% of the teachers reported making phone calls to all of their students, and only 2 of 18 teachers (11%) made any visits to their students’ homes.

At the end of the project, Cohort 2 teachers continued their routine ways of contacting students’ families. Two changes, however, appeared to have occurred over the duration of the project. Of the 12 respondents, 5 (42%) made calls to the homes of *all* of their students, and as noted above, for reasons other than concerns. As one teacher noted, “I make a positive phone call home as soon as possible,” and another noted, “Share good news – tell the parent what the child is doing right.”

The other noteworthy change from the beginning to the end of the project was the increase in the number of teachers who visited their students' homes. Only 11 % (2 out of 18) of participants had conducted family visits at the beginning of the project. At the end of the project, however, 58% (7 out of 12) of the teachers reported making these visits. Furthermore, when asked what had been their most successful practice in involving parents, four teachers identified their family visits. One teacher exclaimed, "They helped tremendously!" (see below for further discussion of family visits and how to address the language barrier).

Participation in the SIFI project appeared to result in teachers developing more positive views about family involvement and expanding their strategies for reaching out to families in order to make contacts and learn from them. In addition, some of the Cohort 2 participants found ways to focus on developing a deeper knowledge of the students and families in their teaching, as illustrated in the examples which follow.

Impact on Instruction

Many of the teachers' written comments on the survey revealed their perceptions of the positive effect family involvement can have on student behavior and academic performance: "I think partnerships with parents will help me to understand my students better academically, socially, and their behavior." "Parents who are involved – children experience more success!" "Understanding where the children come from will help me understand how they do things at home and what experiences they bring with them."

Making such connections with students' background knowledge is especially effective when introducing a new concept. As one teacher noted, this is a way "teachers could learn how to connect content to real world applications," and another viewed "knowing the students, teaching to their strengths" as a worthy outcome of involving parents and working in partnership with them. One teacher also noted that in addition to learning from the families, they could also learn from her. She elaborated, "The best thing I've been involved with was a writing/conferencing/portfolio information workshop teaching new parents about authentic writing and how to be good conference partners. They loved it, and I learned how little they really knew about what we were trying to do." Thus, family involvement in this situation opened a door to better communication and began to establish a reciprocal relationship between the teacher and the parents.

The teachers presented several specific examples at the Share Fair of how their instruction provided opportunities to validate and incorporate student and family knowledge:

- One teacher invited all students to construct their “Family Tree” as a way of celebrating students’ individual identities. She encouraged the students to interview their family members so that parents or other relatives could provide accurate information. In addition, she directed the students to explore their native history and culture and to create posters as a way to share what they had learned. According to the teacher, many students were amazed about how little they had known about the stories of their family members, including distant relatives or ancestors.
- Another teacher’s “A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words” project was similar in intent and outcome, with students’ pictures instead of posters as the final products.
- A kindergarten teacher participant chose to involve the families of her students through a “Family Reading Log” project. She invited all students to read with their families and provided a story book with a family reading log in a zipper-seal plastic bag. At the end of each day, the teacher would offer the bag to one student to take home. The parents then read with their child, and together they wrote comments in the reading log. The teacher followed up with her comments in the log in order to provide essential feedback.
- Another teacher used a similar strategy with a “Daily Family Notebook” as a means of establishing communication among the teacher, parents/family, and students. However, whereas the “family reading log” focused on reading a “class” book, the “family notebook” stressed communication. Further, while the “family reading log” was intended to be passed around to each family of the class, the “family notebook” was more private, because each student had an individual notebook, thus making it more possible for parents to be more open about writing their concerns.
- A “Then and Now” project of another teacher provided an opportunity for her students and families to focus on the comparisons and contrasts of their lives in their native countries before immigration, and their lives now in the United States. The students, with their families’ assistance, created books of photos, drawings, and words. One child illustrated such things as: “My house in Guatemala. It is hot...Now I play in the snow. It is cold...”, and another child shared, “In China I live with my Gandmom and my Gandpop...In America I live with my brother.”

While the teachers’ survey responses and Share Fair products illustrate many positive views and practices, the teachers also recognized the challenges involved in establishing and sustaining effective strategies for involving and engaging families with schools. These challenges can be especially difficult for those families who are new to the United States, unfamiliar with its school contexts, and not yet skilled in English.

Issues and Challenges

Although not necessarily related to the SIFI project only, many of the participants reported positive changes about parent involvement over the past year or two at their schools: “More parents are involved in the PTA.” “(More) parents want to find ways to help their children succeed – work as partners not opponents.” “More volunteers for family events.” “More efforts [on the school’s part] to welcome parents before school starts with a picnic and ‘meet & greet’ orientation.”

However, some teachers also expressed realistic concerns that become barriers to the involvement of more parents and their engagement as partners with schools. These concerns included the inconvenience or lack of transportation, the parents’ working schedules, schools **with a lack of or minimal support for family involvement**, the limited time a teacher possesses, and the language barrier when translators are not available. Concerns such as these must be addressed if schools intend to involve the many families who want to be supportive but find it difficult, especially the families of English language learners. Schools making such a commitment can begin to consider possible solutions such as those that follow.

The transportation problem is not easy to deal with, since many families may live quite far away from the school. However, the school buses which transport students might also be a means for transporting parents when needed. Also, if teachers could construct a trustworthy network among students’ families, car pools could be another option for parents who are willing to attend school activities but lack transportation.

Schools must also be sensitive about parents’ work schedules, attempting to understand what they are and realizing that some immigrant families (and others) work two or three jobs simultaneously in order to earn enough money. Parents are no doubt very busy no matter what kinds of jobs they have. Many teachers are parents as well, so it should not be difficult for them to be empathetic with their students’ parents. These insights can lead teachers and schools to schedule events at the most opportune times and to vary those times in order to accommodate all families in some way. Further, schools must not expect all parents to cooperate in the same way but instead can provide many possible ways to participate, to communicate (e.g., phone calls, letters/notes, e-mail), and to feel connected. In addition, teachers can convey appreciation for parents’ efforts and a sincere welcome when parents visit (see Kyle et al., 2002, 2006 for more detailed strategies for effective family involvement).

Although many teachers affirmed the positive impact of family visits, one indicated the concern that many other teachers who have ELLs as students

might have as well, “It’s more difficult to communicate with more families that don’t speak English.” Those concerned about the language barrier and the need for translating accurately might find it useful to use other students, older siblings, neighbors, or relatives as translators. Also, bilingual dictionary websites can provide needed assistance, for example, www.wikipedia.org (over 7 million articles in over 200 languages so far); www.encyclopedia.com; and The Internet Picture Dictionary www.pdictionary.com (French, German, Italian, Spanish, and English).

At the end of the survey, one teacher provided this insight about the time commitment required to strengthen the involvement of families and also offered a suggestion:

On the survey, most of the items are, of course, very important. However, teachers absolutely DO NOT have time for all of it. Parents, like students, will each have individual needs and strengths, and it will require great emotional and intellectual resources on the part of the teacher to successfully negotiate parent interactions. I think that if parent involvement improves student learning, schools should provide/hire parent involvement directors to develop and coordinate programs.

The suggestion may seem too exaggerated when first considered. However, arranging high quality programs and valuable projects for family involvement is not an easy job, especially when different languages and cultures are involved. This teacher has identified a critical need for further discussion, informed understanding, committed resources, and dedicated effort to accomplish the goal of increased involvement and engagement of families with schools.

Conclusions

Participants in the Sheltered Instruction and Family Involvement (SIFI) project participated in many professional development experiences. They learned about research demonstrating the positive effects of family involvement on students’ academic achievement and read resources that described practical strategies to implement. In addition, they described their intended goals for increasing family involvement in action plans. Follow-up discussions at project meetings included time to discuss their efforts and get feedback from other participants. These explicit activities of the project appear to have helped several of the teachers make changes in some of their views about family involvement and related practices. Several teachers in both Cohorts increased their efforts to contact, involve, and learn from students’ families, and they made modifications in their teaching to connect and build from students’ background

knowledge. With this kind of support, however challenging it may be to accomplish and whatever issues must be addressed to meet those challenges, the academic success of English language learners becomes more possible.

References

- Darling-Hammond, L. (1998). Teacher learning that supports student learning. *Educational Leadership*, 55, 6-11.
- Echevarria, J., Short, D., & Powers, K. (2006). School reform and standards-based education: An instructional model for English language learners. *Journal of Educational Research*, 99(4), 195-211.
- Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. (2004). *Making content comprehensible for English language learners: The SIOP model* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Epstein, J., & Salinas, K. (1993). *School and family partnerships: Surveys and summaries*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, Center on School, Family, & Community Partnerships.
- Gándara, P., Maxwell-Jolly, J., & Driscoll, A. (2005). *Listening to teachers of English language learners: A survey of California teachers' challenges, experiences, and professional development needs*. Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. Retrieved October 15, 2007, from <http://www.cftl.org/centerviews/july05.html>
- Goldenberg, C., & Gallimore, R. (1991). Changing teaching takes more than a one-shot workshop. *Educational Leadership*, 49, 69-72.
- Guarino, A. J., Echevarria, J., Short, D., Schick, J. E., Forbes, S., & Rueda, R. (2001). The sheltered instruction observation protocol. *Journal of Research in Education*, 11(1), 138-140.
- Kyle, D., McIntyre, E., Miller, K., & Moore, G. (2002). *Reaching out: A K-8 resource for connecting families and schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Kyle, D., McIntyre, E., Miller, K., & Moore, G. (2006). *Bridging school and home through family nights*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Marcon, R. (1999). Positive relationships between parent school involvement and public school inner-city preschoolers' development and academic performance. *School Psychology Review*, 28(3), 395-412.
- McIntyre, E., Kyle, D., & Chen, C.-T. (2007). *Teachers learning to teach English learners in the regular classroom*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
- Miedel, W., & Reynolds, A. (1999). Parent involvement in early intervention for disadvantaged children: Does it matter? *Journal of School Psychology*, 37(4), 379-402.
- Moll, L., & González, N. (2004). Engaging life: A funds-of-knowledge approach to multicultural education. In J. Banks (Ed.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 699-715). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2002). *Schools and staffing survey, 1999-2000: Overview of the data for public, private, public charter, and Bureau of Indian Affairs elementary and secondary schools* (NCES 2002-313). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Sanders, M., & Herting, J. (2000). Gender and the effects of school, family, and church support on the academic achievement of African-American urban adolescents. In M.G. Sanders (Ed.), *Schooling students placed at risk: Research, policy, and practice in the education of poor and minority adolescents* (pp. 141-161). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Tharp, R., & Gallimore, R. (1993). *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning and schooling in social context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (2002). *A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement*. Santa Cruz, CA: University of California, Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence. Retrieved February 25, 2002, from http://crede.berkeley.edu/research/llaa/1.1_final.html
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2007). *Fact sheet: 2006 American Community Survey, selected characteristics of the native and foreign-born populations*. Retrieved October 15, 2007, from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-qr_name=ACS_2006_EST_G00_S0501&-ds_name=ACS_2006_EST_G00_&-redoLog=false

Cheng-Ting Chen is originally from Taiwan; she has taught ESL in U.S. public schools. She is currently focusing her research on ESL literacy in order to improve the English education programs in Taiwan.

Diane W. Kyle is a professor of curriculum in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the University of Louisville. Among her other publications, she has co-authored books and articles on connecting schools and families and on instructional practices that build from family knowledge. She teaches graduate courses on curriculum issues and on effective strategies for teaching English language learners.

Ellen McIntyre is professor and Head of Elementary Education at North Carolina State University. Her research areas include sociocultural theory and practice, early literacy, and family involvement, particularly for diverse underserved populations.

Correspondence concerning this article may be directed to Diane W. Kyle, Department of Teaching and Learning, College of Education & Human Development, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, 40292.

Authors' Note:

The work that led to the writing of this article was supported by the U.S. Department of Education, PR Award Number T195N040101. The contents, findings, and opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.