

INCREASING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT OF ELL STUDENTS

**Increasing the Parental Involvement of ELL Students in Our Schools:  
Improving Teacher-Parent Communication**

**By**

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**Abstract**

The rapid increase in the number of English Language Learners (ELL) in schools presents new challenges and opportunities. Central among these challenges is meeting the specific needs of an increasingly diverse student population. This challenge hinges on the sometimes limited involvement of EAL (English as and Additional Language) parents due, in part, to communication barriers with their child's or children's school. This study aims to better understand the challenges that accompany these barriers and improve the communication between a teacher, their student and parent. This study will draw conclusions using a qualitative approach, interviewing teachers to better understand these communication issues, and providing strategies to improve communication and thus, increase the parental involvement of ELL students in their schools.

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## **Increasing ELL Parental Involvement in Our Schools: Teacher Strategies and Practices**

### **Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION**

#### **Introduction to the Research Study**

Parental involvement in a child's academic school life has become a topic of great interest among researchers throughout North America, many of whom have concluded that the link between home, school, and parental involvement is recognized to be very important for a student's academic success (Berger, 2000). The benefits of parental involvement in schools are reflected in students' academic gains, increased parent self-confidence, satisfaction with schools, and overall school improvement (Karther & Lowden, 1997).

Over the course of the last decade, there has been a surge of diversity that has flooded the schools of Ontario, Canada, and Ontario's largest city, Toronto, especially. In that 10 years, immigration has increased dramatically, so much so that close to 50 percent of Toronto's public school population has learned English as an Additional Language (EAL) (Cummins, 1997). With the rapid growth of English Language Learners (ELL) in schools comes the challenge of meeting the needs of ELLs and their families. This challenge hinges on the fact that many EAL parents have great difficulty involving themselves in the academic progress of their children, in part, as a result of the communication barriers between themselves and their child's educator, Moles (1993) reports that EAL parents' communication with their children's schools is essentially decreasing. Moreover, as a child's English language speaking progresses as a result of their education and their parents' does not, the barrier only becomes greater.

Understanding this fact allows one to acknowledge the serious issues of limited

communication between EAL parents and teachers. Although this paper examines the crisis of EAL parents' non-involvement, it undeniably acknowledges the fact that not *all* EAL parents are uninvolved. There are countless EAL parents who attend to their child's every educational need and are highly engaged.

Through my research, I hope to better understand the factors that cause these barriers between EAL parents, their children and their schools; and with that understanding, begin to bridge the gap in communication between these three integral parts of a child's education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

As a teacher candidate, I have had many opportunities to work in very diverse settings in both public and private education systems. Throughout my classroom interactions with teachers and students, I have seen firsthand the problems that teachers face in communicating with EAL parents. Such experiences have allowed me to gain insight into teaching and to better understand the gap that lies between teachers and many EAL parents. Based on my interest and exposure to ELL education, the purpose of my study is to potentially improve the current ELL education system by including in it a road map of methods and suggestions which other teachers and myself can use as a guideline to better the communication efforts and results when interacting with EAL parents. This research paper will aim to identify and understand the limitations and preventions of EAL parent involvement in ELL student learning. I will focus my research on grades four through eight and address the various difficulties that both teachers and their ELL students experience due to the lack of parental involvement. My research will examine the current strategies teachers attempt to use when communicating with EAL parents. It

will also examine the struggles that teachers endure due to parental lack of involvement. The ultimate purpose of this study is to find ways or solutions to bridge the gap between EAL parents and teachers. Through this research I hope to better understand the perspective of each role involved in the education of a child—teacher, student, and parent—and with this understanding derive guidelines that will help teachers, like myself, spark parental involvement to help their child and our student succeed.

### **Research Questions**

The main purpose of my study is to explore the following overarching question:

*How can we increase an ELL student's parental involvement to better their education?*

The following sub-questions will be used as a guide to support the central research question:

1. What are the current strategies and practices that are utilized by teachers to develop communication between EAL parents?
2. What common difficulties are students faced with as a result of their parents' lack of involvement? Does this lack of involvement affect the students academically in any way?

### **Background of the Researcher**

My interest in this area began while I resided in Queens, New York where I began my teaching career. While enrolled in one of the most prestigious Masters of Education programs in New York at Queens College I was given the opportunity to enter into countless classrooms as a volunteer and teacher candidate, there I witnessed the constant

struggle that ELL students underwent and the struggle teachers endured with meeting the needs of any student requiring additional assistance and attention. Repeatedly, I felt let down and somewhat accountable seeing ELL students go unnoticed because of a teacher's responsibility to manage the needs of "the many" and not "the few." Due to these experiences, I have always been drawn to ELL students that struggle in understanding the day's lesson and relating to classroom examples, indeed I find myself assisting them whenever possible.

Working with these teachers, I often found myself listening to them complain about the lack of participation from the parents of their ELL students. I saw the wasted efforts of teachers as they tried and failed to explain to parents how important their involvement is in their child's achievements. They explained that without at-home reinforcement ELL students are often left behind in the classroom, only to receive the occasional head nod of acknowledgement or quick response of "yes yes," all the while knowing that their words are in most cases not even being understood. I have seen several teachers attempt to reach out to the parents of their ELL students' for even just a parent-teacher meeting to discuss their child's development only to be denied or simply ignored. Often enough, these parents are truly interested in their child's education but are unable to express that interest due to a language barrier that they themselves suffer from, and which in turn unfortunately prevents their child from prospering.

Through my exposure of working in various classrooms, I am wholeheartedly aware of the neglect and challenges faced by many ELL students. And as a teacher, my ultimate goal is to help build a better foundation to ensure greater success for the education of these students. I want to eliminate just one of the many hurdles these

students face that inevitably causes them to fall behind their classmates, eventually diminishing their academic potential.

### **Overview**

Chapter 1 has introduced my research by establishing the purpose of the study, the research questions, as well as how I came to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter two reviews the central issues surrounding EAL family involvement. I explore the relationship between student achievement and parent involvement, families of high socioeconomic status vs. families of low socioeconomic status, and the barriers influencing an EAL family's lack involvement in schools. Chapter 3 provides the methodology and procedure used in this study, including information about the sample participants and data collection instruments. Chapter 4 identifies participants in the study and organizes the findings into themes that relate to the research questions. Chapter 5 includes a reflection of the research findings, the implications of this study, the limitations and further study. And finally at the end, the references and a list of appendices can be found.

## Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

There has been a vast amount of literature that focuses on EAL parental involvement in their child's education; however there has been very little work on the strategies offered to teachers that can be employed when needing to activate an EAL parent's participation. I have examined the literature that focuses on family involvement and student achievement, the ways socioeconomic status influences parental involvement, and barriers to parental involvement. I present the major findings within this chapter and as well address relevant topics that are pertinent to my research question: *How can we increase an ELL student's parental involvement to better their education?*

### Family Involvement and Student Achievement

There is a great deal of literature linking parental involvement to student achievement. As a result of these studies continuously proving that student achievement is actively linked to family involvement, many schools have begun to implement programs promoting parental involvement in their child's academic life. In fact, Ontario's Ministry of Education recently released, *Parents in partnership: A parent engagement policy for Ontario schools* (2010), which formally recognizes and supports a vision of parents as both valued partners and active participants in their children's education. The document draws on numerous studies which conclude that "student learning and achievement improve when parents play an active role in their children's education and that good schools become even better when parents are involved" (p. 5). *Parents in Partnership* goes into detail about Ontario's commitment to support and enhance parent engagement in schools. The document goes on to state: "the greater the support that

families provide for their children's learning and educational progress, the more likely that their children will do well in school and continue on with their education" (pg. 8). Because researchers have found a strong connection between parental involvement and students' achievement, they urge teachers and principals to devote considerable energy and resources to promote the involvement of parents in their children's education. Furthermore, Epstein and Daubar (1991) suggest schools help parents "build home conditions for learning, understand communications from school, become productive volunteers, share responsibilities in their children's education in leaning activities related to the curriculum at home, and include parents' voice and decisions that affect school and their children" (p. 291).

Surveying decades of research, it is safe to say that there are many different types of parenting practices and behaviors associated with positive student outcomes. Those include authoritative parenting practices (Baumrind, 1974)—which in itself may have a positive benefit on grades and school but may have a negative outcome on the mental health of children;—high expectations and aspirations (Astone & McLanahan, 1991); parent-teacher communications; participation in school events or activities; parental assistance at home, and participation in and discussion about learning activities (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Each of these practices has proven to play a huge role in increasing student achievement.

Having parents involved in their child's education creates a positive effect that begins with the parents and continues through the children. Indeed Epstein argues that "Among the most frequently mentioned expected benefits of parent involvement are the increased or sustained interest and support of parents in the school programs and in their child's progress" (1986, p. 278). When parents are involved in the school, they

essentially know what is happening in the student's life, "parents feel competent when they know what the school is doing" (Epstein, 1986, p. 288). Ultimately, when parents are involved, their attitude towards school becomes more positive which furthers their involvement with the child's educational process.

The involvement of a parent in their child's life has an overwhelmingly positive effect. Research has proven that parent encouragement at home and participation in school activities are the key factors related to children's achievement, "more significant than either student ability or SES" (Ziegler, 1987, p. 68). Ann Milne agrees with this idea after reviewing over 100 students, looking at not only SES, but also family structure, and mothers' employment outside the house. Her study concludes "what is important is the ability of the parent(s) to provide pro-educational resources for their children—be they financial, material, or experiential" (1989, p.58).

Another study conducted by Rumberger, et. al. found that parents of high school drop outs were less engaged in their children's schooling than the parents of students who did not drop out prior to graduation. The study looked at parents attendance at parental school activities (e.g., PTA meetings and open house programs), attendance at student school activities (e.g., athletic events and drama and music productions), and helping with homework (1990, p. 295). Ferhrmann et. al. (1987) concluded that, "Parents might well help their high school children achieve higher grades through monitoring their daily activities, by keeping close track of how they are doing in school, and by working closely with their students concerning planning for post-high school pursuits" (p. 337). These studies suggest that a student's achievement is highly dependent on the parents' involvement. With parents involved, students are likely to succeed way past high school. It is clear that when parents were able to intervene at school, students were more

consistently guided toward higher-level education. However, this becomes a difficult task for parents who do not speak English or lack the understanding of the educational system.

It is quite simple to understand—when parents are involved in the educational process of their child or children, their child or children will feel compelled to continuously improve and impress the parents with good grades and other school related achievements in order to receive praise and gratification from the parents. Epstein (1986) agrees with this and writes: “Students gain an edge in personal and academic development if their families place an emphasis on schooling, let their children know how they do, and do so continually over the school years” (p. 289).

Regardless of income, education level, or cultural background, all parents can and should contribute to their child’s success. For parents who are unable to be involved –be it due to work or time—can still support their child’s education by encouraging learning and influencing high expectations for their children. By setting the bar high, children are able to learn at an early age what it takes to meet their parents’ expectations. With students who are encouraged at home to reach high achievement, they can eventually earn a successful life in society.

### **Socioeconomic Status (SES)**

Alexander and Entwisle (1994) suggest student achievement is largely affected by the socioeconomic status (SES) of the family while others argue socioeconomic background “actually sets the road map of achievements” (Saifi & Mehmood, 2011, p. 124). It is not always the case that language minority families fall into lower SES, but it is very true that linguistic and cultural barriers can create a similar inconsistency of achievement. Families who fall into the lower socioeconomic status and have not

achieved a higher education are likely to negatively affect a child's formal schooling. Nonetheless, Karther and Lowden (1997) point out: "despite [parents'] own lower school achievement, many parents value education, believing it to be a pathway to success for their children" (p. 41). Studies of low socioeconomic families in North Carolina found that parents who experienced failure in their schooling still desired education for their children (Karther & Lowden, 1997, p. 43). These parents hold education and teachers in "high regard" and believe that their children can "achieve greatness" (Karther & Lowden, 1997, p. 41). Another study conducted by Lareau Annette (2003) speaks on the idea of concerted cultivation, where middle class parents take an active role in their children's education and development by using controlled organized activities and fostering a sense of entitlement through encouraged discussion. Annette goes on to argue, however, that families with lower income do not participate in this change, causing their children to have a sense of constraint (2003). Annette concludes that lower income families have children who do not "succeed to the levels of the middle income children, and [therefore] do not feel entitled, argumentative and prepared for adult life" (2003).

A study completed by Baharudin and Luster (1998) found that socioeconomic status does indeed affect student outcome. Their work suggests a huge correlation between parental socioeconomic status and educational attainment. The study examines the impact of parental socioeconomic status on a child's education by assessing the impact of age, gender, marital status, income, region, and parental socioeconomic status on education.

Another study conducted by Hill and Taylor (2004) concluded that parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to be completely involved in their child's education than parents of a lower socioeconomic status. They pointed out that

parents with a higher education level tend to be strong advocates of their child's education. Because these parents are often able to set aside time to support their children and attend school activities, their children are able to see education in a different manner causing them to want to achieve success (Hill & Taylor, 2004). In contrast, parents with low socioeconomic status often find themselves struggling to make ends meet causing them to not have any time to spare for their children in imparting values, good habits, manners (Saifi, Mehmood, 2011),—leaving children to not receive the needed proper nurturing they need to succeed in school.

One study that dates back to 1985 succinctly answers the question of why there is such a strong positive correlation between SES and student achievement by stating: “The fact that family SES is related to school achievement doesn't mean that rich kids are born smarter. It means that, in more affluent families, children are more likely to be exposed to experiences that stimulate intellectual development” (Sattes, 1985, p. 2). We can thus identify a huge correlation between parents' SES and student achievement. Parents of high SES are understood to often be able to provide a better environment for students to succeed, while many parents of low SES struggle to find the time to become involved in their child's schooling.

### **Barriers to Parental Involvement**

There are many factors that contribute to a parent's lack of involvement in their child's academic achievement. Rebecca Burns (1993) concluded that there are four major barriers to parental involvement, especially pertaining to parents with a low socioeconomic status. The major barriers include: constraints on parent's availability,

disparities between home and school cultures, feelings of inadequacies, and unclear communication due to language (Burns, 1993).

As the most recent census data from StatsCan reveals, the nature of the country has changed. And as it continues to drastically change the image of a perfect nuclear family to be something of ancient history. Den Tandt reports “‘Traditional’ nuclear families married couples with children now make up barely more than a third of families, 31.9%. That’s well down from 37.4% in the 2001 census” (2012).. In this day and age, families less are frequently made up of both parents, than in the past. Den Tandt reports that the number of single-parent homes has also “grown nearly 10% since the last census, with the number of male lone-parent families up 16.2%” (2012). This forces these parents to have to make up the income of the missing parent by taking on multiple jobs. This causes many parents to have a very restricted amount of free time, which in turn results in unavailability to participate in activities during regular school hours or attend teacher conferences and after school programs.

The second barrier that Burns looks at is the disparity between the cultures of the parents and the teachers (Burns, 1993). Cultural barriers can include the perceptions of parents’ own school experiences, and feelings of powerlessness. Miramontes, et al. (1997) believe that there can be only one key factor that is most difficult to overcome for EAL families and that is “language minority parents may view the teacher as in a position of power” (p. 92). As cited in Rudnitski (1992), Litwak and Meyer (1974) found that “parents from racial, ethnic and cultural minorities, especially those of low socioeconomic status, tend to feel less affinity for the school than those in the mainstream middle class” (p.15). This shows that schools can and often do have different values than

those of the family as well as inability to communicate with culturally diverse families effectively.

Also in Rudnitski (1992), Lontos (1991) writes that:

Low income, culturally different parents have traditionally been marginalized through an inability to communicate with schools and through the inflexibility of the school as an institution. This tradition has fostered the feelings of inadequacy, failure, and poor self-worth which are cited as reasons for low participation of parents from marginalized groups (p.15).

The above quote places the burden of connection on the school and/or teacher, while in many cultures, parents often believe it is the teacher's responsibility to form a dialogue and if there is no reaching out from the teacher's end then the parent will likely assume that there is no problem with the child's education. Many cultures believe that their children are the school's responsibility during school hours, believing that the two dimensions are not connected in any way and should be kept separate—when at school, the teacher is in charge, and when at home, the parents are in charge. For example, "In many Latin American countries it is considered rude for a parent to intrude into the life of the school. Parents believe that it is the school's job to educate and the parent's job to nurture and that the two jobs do not mix" (Espinosa, 1995). The success of breaking down such a cultural barrier relies heavily on the teacher's ability to recognize not only the negative in a child's progress but also the positive, therefore giving them reason and purpose to reach out to their student's parents regardless of their progress. This necessity however, places tremendous pressure on the teacher who the parent believes must begin the communication process. The more the teacher can make positive communication with EAL families, the more comfortable the EAL parents may feel towards the school and

teacher. This allows parents to believe that they are influential players in their child's academic success. Furthermore, many immigrant parents have come from countries where there is a clear division of responsibilities between the parent and the school, and it would be highly unlikely for these parents to consider themselves as being on the same level as the teacher (Goldenberg & Sullivan, 1994). For these parents, they believe that teachers must do their jobs at teaching and it ends there. These parents may not see education as a two-way street that involves both parent and teacher but instead believe the teacher is being paid to educate their child, and that he or she does not need or should not need help in doing so.

The next barrier is the parents' feeling of inadequacy when it comes to their child's education. Karther and Lowden (1997) describe this feeling as a result of their own "low educational achievement" (p. 42). Parents tend to view their children as a reflection of themselves and will "avoid situations where they expect criticisms of themselves or their children" (Karther & Lowden, 1997, p. 42). Furthermore, EAL families with a low SES may feel "self-conscious" when interacting with any higher socioeconomic status parents (Karther & Lowden, 1997, p. 42). This may cause their feeling of inadequacy to increase.

Language is probably the most obvious barrier and the one that inhibits most communication. Parents and teachers can become frustrated if communication is difficult and they may avoid direct communication. Parents can feel powerless in terms of helping their children in school and are therefore are not able to give them the support they need. In many cases, parents are unable to attend teacher conferences or partake in school activities because of the language barrier. Such parents may look at these opportunities to attend a school event and see no benefit in doing so due to the inability to

understand English. Guo (2006) points out: parents are frustrated by the school's "lack of available translation services" (p. 83). He notes that "frequently, EAL parents avoid going to schools because they cannot communicate in English, and there is no one at school who speaks their native language" (p. 83). Parents tend to use their children as an interpreter for many simple aspects in life, such as: reading the "mail, answer[ing] the telephone, translat[ing] newsletters, and interpret[ing] at parent-teacher conferences" (Guo, 2006, p. 83). Guo (2006) believes that asking ELL students to act as a translator will be problematic, simply because they are learning English themselves and this "may prevent them from understanding the subtleties of coded speech in the school context" (p. 83). In order to spark parental involvement, schools need to commit to bringing in skilled translators who will support the parents-teacher dialogue. Guo informs readers that "The British Columbia Teacher Federation reports that many parents of ESL students try to communicate with schools, but are hampered by their English ability and the lack of available translation services" (2006, p.83). Although this pertains to the schools in British Columbia it may also account for what is occurring in Toronto, Ontario. Schools often request a translator to be available for parent-teacher conferences but that one or two people cannot possibly help translate the numerous conferences around the school.

Miramontes, et al. (1997) discuss the importance of family interaction with the school, and they contend that parental participation in schooling is positively associated with academic achievement regardless of home language. These researchers state that it is imperative for schools to foster partnerships with families whose home language may not be English in order to enhance children's education. Encouraging the relationship between school staff and language minority families may be difficult at first in schools

where there has not been a lot of cultural or linguistic diversity, but committing to outreach for these families is vital for all aspects.

In Chapter 4 of my study, I explore the impact that family involvement, socioeconomic status, and barriers have on teachers and parental communication. I will also focus on the key strategies that have given the participants an easier dialogue.

### **Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The qualitative research paradigm is often used in educational research simply because of the accessible context of a classroom or a group of students. This type of research allows one to work directly with people, causing little disruption to the natural setting, and analyzing people's experiences.

This is a qualitative research study that focuses on a review of the literature surrounding parental involvement in an ELL students' education. This study includes field work that consisted of face-to-face interviews with two teachers in the province of Ontario; all of whom had experiences working with ELL students and therefore made efforts in communicating with their EAL parents during their teaching careers. The goal of this research is to explore effective strategies that teachers can implement when encountering difficulty in communication with an EAL parent. Secondly, this research will aim to understand the barriers facing EAL parents from being active participants in their child's education.

#### **Procedure**

##### *Literature Review*

In this research, I began with a literature review, which was done in order to help familiarize myself with the research already conducted surrounding an ELL students' parental involvement. Relevant sources used during the literature review process included academic journal articles and books, as well as government documents and case studies. All of the materials used in this study focused on education and aimed to improve the parent-teacher dynamic.

*Data Collection*

The main instrument of my data collection was a semi-structured interview. This style of interview allows me to partake in a two-way communication with my interviewee so that I can respond with follow-up questions that will enhance the data collected thus, making it more relevant and understandable.

After drafting my research questions and dividing them according to themes. I thoroughly revised them and made several improvements that helped with its clarity. My supervisor and peers all helped in this process of improving the questions. It was then given to my supervisor for an official approval.

I used snowball sampling to recruit interview participants. Each participant was first contacted by email and given an explanation of the research. Participants were asked to voice any concerns before signing the consent form (see Appendix B). I provided the participants with a copy of the questions prior to the interview in order for them to prepare them for the interview and to remove any fear of providing responses. This helped them become familiar with the topic and to consider exactly what experiences they would like to share beforehand.

The 45-minute one-on-one interview sessions took place in the classroom of my participants which was clearly a convenient place for them. I used the general interview guide approach (Turner, 2010, p. 755) when asking participants to answer the 11 open-ended questions. I chose this interview approach because it is structured to provide consistency in the type of information collected from participants but also flexible by allowing there to be room for probing beyond the 11 questions.

The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. Throughout the interview, I took notes of key words or phrases that caught my attention.

After each interview, I replayed the recording and listened carefully in order to create a transcription.

Please refer to Appendix A for a full list of the interview questions used in this research.

### *Data Analysis*

In order to analyze my data, I first transcribed each of the interviews without the aid of a transcription software. These transcriptions were used for the sole use of analysis for this study. I then analyzed the transcripts thoroughly by searching for any reoccurring themes. My data analysis was guided in part by the aiding literature review where I explored multiple topics and found commonalities in the research already conducted. I then used different coloured highlighters to highlight each of the themes found in the scripts. The data was then taken and organized into multiple charts which helped me make quick references when needed. Next, I analyzed the interviews again to search for any themes that were present but not mentioned in the literature review. In addition, I kept a record of the strategies that teachers used when communicating with their EAL students' parents, and noted the reasons behind their successes and failures.

### **Participants**

I interviewed two teachers who—for the purpose of this study—will take the identity of a pseudonym. Both teachers are from schools located in Toronto Ontario, and both are part of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).

The criteria needed to partake in this study were as follows:

1. Teaches at the junior/intermediate level: Grades 4-8

2. Works in a classroom setting where the number of ELL students is at least 5
3. Works directly with ELL students at least 4 hours a week
4. Has conducted at least 3 EAL parent-teacher conferences

I wanted my participants to be from the junior/intermediate level simply because I am an aspiring junior/intermediate teacher who would like to further broaden the research spectrum with data for this grade level. Because my research studies ELL students and their parents, it is imperative that the teachers interviewed be working in a classroom that includes several ELL students to ensure they have sufficient breadth of experience. Furthermore, in order for my participants to share insightful and effective data they need to have direct experience in working with their ELL students and their EAL parents.

The two participants, who will be referred to henceforth by their pseudonyms, were selected for the qualitative interview. Mike is an EAL teacher with 8 years of experience, who is currently teaching and is an EAL Literacy Resource teacher in the Toronto District School Board. My second participant, Amy, is currently a teacher in a grade 6 classroom in the Toronto District School Board, and has 9 years of experience. Amy has taught in this school for four years and is a TOEFL certified teacher who taught in China for 3 years.

### **Ethical Review Procedures**

In this study, I followed the ethical review approval procedures for the Master of Teaching program at the University of Toronto.

As I searched for participants, I informally asked teachers to participate in my study through email. In my initial email, I explained the background of my research and

why I selected them to participate. Once a participant agreed to an interview, I visited the teacher, reviewed with him or her the nature of my study, reviewed the Letter of Consent (see Appendix B), and explained the interview procedures. Prior to the interviews, I provided them with a copy of the questions and asked for their permission to audio record our session.

I continuously reminded participants: “that participation is voluntary...[and know] that they may freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study” (Glesne, 1999, 116). I also made a conscious effort to ensure that each participant felt comfortable during the entire process. For the course of my data collection I followed the procedures outlined in the consent letter. Once I completed the interviews, I transcribed each interview, read over the results, and began to compile my findings. The participant was made aware that my research supervisor is the only other person who will have access to the data before the completion of the research study. When this research study was complete, I ensured that all information respected the anonymity of the participant, along with any students that he or she may have mentioned. To provide full confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for the individuals, students, and the institutions. I have also excluded any personal information about the participant that was shared during the interview. The participants were also provided with a draft of the research and were given the opportunity to revise or change any previously answered question if they felt necessary. And finally, each participant was informed that they can request a copy of the final product of the research study.

**Limitations**

There are two potential limitations of this research. First, the sample size of the research is very small. I believe my research would be more successful if I was given the chance to add more participants. The data collection is very limited due to the total amount of participants, and thus it was quite difficult to find common themes in this limited amount of data.

The second limitation was my inability to directly interview the parents of ELL students. My research would be more effective given the chance to seek out EAL parents and discuss their perceptions of education. I want to understand what the cultural differences in education are and why they prevent parents from involving themselves in their child's education.

## **Chapter 4: FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

Two participants, each teaching in schools with a high population of EAL students, have contributed to the findings of this research project. This chapter will outline the overall findings from the data collected during those interviews. This chapter is organized according to the following themes:

1. Barriers to parental involvement
2. Practices used by teachers
3. Practices used by the school

Mike is an EAL teacher with 8 years of experience, who is an EAL Literacy Resource teacher in the Toronto District School Board. My second participant, Amy, is currently a teacher of a grade 6 classroom in the Toronto District School Board, and has 9 years of experience. Amy has taught in this school for four years and is a TOEFL certified teacher who taught in China for 3 years.

### **Barriers to Parental Involvement**

One of the most common themes running through the interviews was that barriers specific to immigrant parents' experiences hindered their involvement. Both participants agreed that there were certainly barriers that prevented parents from getting involved with their child's schooling. Based on the interview questions, four major barriers were found: language and communication, culture, socioeconomic, and time.

*Language and Communication*

The first barrier that appeared was the most obvious, language. For many EAL parents, language is a major barrier to communication between school and home. Both participants agreed that parents of high socioeconomic status were well aware of ways in which they can become involved at their child's school but did not believe that parents of low socioeconomic status were aware of the same. Participants were then asked why they believed parents of lower SES had difficulty becoming aware of this and responded that sometimes parents do not desire to become involved. Nonetheless, Mike later recanted his statement and pointed out that language was a key reason for a lack of parental involvement. Mike went on to highlight the need for schools to hire "staff that are bilingual" in order to "assist new families to the school or to translate written materials provided by the school." He also suggested: "it would be helpful if the school provided an interpreter to the parents—so they can feel more comfortable coming into the school and participating in events." Both Mike and Amy were adamant that there needed to be an end to students translating for their parents at parent-teacher conferences. They both recalled countless conferences where the students were forced into attending the conference in order to translate what was said by the teacher but both were not completely sure if "words or phrases were lost in translation."

Amy later drew attention to a *NY Times* article that she recalled reading about children translating for their parents. She recalled the article saying it has been proven that the practice causes children "stress, embarrassment, and the need to grow up way too fast." In many cases because a parent's English may not be the best which may cause his or hers child to feel ashamed and in turn discourage them from attending school functions. She went on to describe the article's details: "it mentioned parents pulling

their kids out of schools so that they can take them to various places of appointments—like the doctor, immigration lawyer, or even the bank.” Amy reiterated the fact that children are pushed into an adult world by bombarding them with the realities of adult-life. Parents using children as translators not only cause the child to have to “mature faster” but also have to “assume responsibility for not being able to solve a problem for the parent” according to Amy. Furthermore, the duty of translating for one’s parents shifts the family dynamic, causing it to potentially become inverted. These roles are now reversed, triggering parents to become more dependent on their children rather than the child on the parents. Amy then pointed out the major problem with a child translating for a parent is that children are using the privilege of translating to their advantage. For example, Amy described having a student in her class who “tricked his mother into writing notes to excuse his absence from school without the mother even knowing the real contents of the letter.” Clearly, Amy believes that students should not be used as their parents’ translator.

Amy’s worry of parents using children as translators echoes Guo’s article, mentioned in Chapter 2, who believes that the situation is very problematic for these students, who are in a fragile state as they learn a whole new language. He, like Amy, agrees that “sometimes ESL students may not translate the authentic message” (2006, p. 83).

Mike mentioned that there is a huge push on teachers to find alternative ways to communicate with parents. But found it impossible to do so—“how can I communicate with parents if they do not respond to anything I write in the student’s communication book, or answer my emails.” He went on to say that he even began calling parents whenever important notices were sent home with the students and thought that was a

helpful approach to getting the message across to parents. It is clear that written materials are the primary way most schools communicate with parents. And for that simple fact, Mike suggested that schools make written notices in multiple languages. He believed this would “reach the parents and give them a warm feeling of comfort to see that their language was being recognized by the school which can highly influence a parent’s comfort level to change towards the school.”

When asked about the at-home parent support for student homework, both Amy and Mike had similar answers. Depending on the parents’ own level of education, some find homework beyond their understanding and are unable to assist. However, some parents do not know when they should step in to ensure everything is okay and homework is being completed, while also trying to promote responsibility and let their children do things on their own, this supports the earlier work of Griffin & Galassi, 2010. It is difficult for parents to provide at home help with homework simply because they are unable to read and comprehend relevant assignments and instructions written in English. Amy suggests, “homework is important for students but helping children with homework can be difficult especially if you are still learning English.” She went on to say that some parents are able to understand the material but the child needs to translate it to them and “by the time it’s all over both child and parent are too frustrated to go any further.” This suggests it can seem impossible for parents to help children with the material when there is such a huge language gap. Mike points out that parents’ inability to help their children with homework may make them feel powerless. He suggests telling the parents that “if you can’t physically help your child then at least encourage them to finish their homework and ask to see it every night. Also encourage students to share lessons learned during the school day.” This is a great way for parents to become involved in their child’s

school life. It is safe to say that informed and engaged parents can help their children make course decisions, ultimately guiding them towards a successful education. But unfortunately, parents who face a significant language barrier with teachers are left uninformed and unengaged. Nonetheless, there are teachers like Amy and Mike who are willing to find new ways to reach out to parents.

### *Culture*

When asked about the way culture acts as a barrier for parental involvement, both Amy and Mike had similar responses. Like Mike, Amy had a difficult time reaching out to parents and thought that this challenge with outreach came from the fact that “some parents believe there is a separation between school and home. Some parents believe the teacher is responsible for the child’s learning and have no idea of the role we expect them to play—by reinforcing reading and classroom learning at home. But once you meet with parents and explain what is expected, they do try their best to help at home.” There are many cultures where parents are not expected to take an active role in their child’s educational careers. These parents take the approach of “trusting the school” and do not question their decisions. Amy describes “how this can become problematic for teachers, who, hope that students go home to a place where parents reinforce what is being learned at school.” This correlates with the research mentioned in Chapter 2 where different cultures, i.e., Hispanic culture, takes a back seat to their child’s education, leaving it in the hands of the educator.

Furthermore, Amy mentioned the idea of parents feeling like “the school is a threat to preserving their first language and culture and thus [may] be reluctant to fully participate in the school activities.” These parents feel that when their child becomes

assimilated into the English-speaking world of the school and society that their native language eventually becomes lost. Amy went on to say “once children learn English, they tend not to maintain or develop the language spoken at home, even if it is the only one their parents know.” Her views sided with the parents on this matter, she said:

What do you think happens when young children find themselves in a new attractive country and in a new Canadian school? What do they do when they discover that the only language that is spoken there is one that they do not know? What happens when they realize that the language spoken at home is actually a barrier to their participation in the social world? What happens is that these students learn English, and often enough they disregard their first language.

She went on to say that “if I were those parents I would hate the schooling system also; it’s what destroying my child’s primary language, their culture, ... their roots.”

Of significance here was the trouble Mike had when a few parents from diverse cultures did not approve of a group-work assignment that was to be done outside of class. With student-directed learning, it is expected for there to be a great deal of collaboration and interaction between students occurring both in and out of school. Mike explained the situation he had when he assigned a science project that required collaboration out of school on the students’ own time. Thinking that this was a great way for students to get to know each other (since it was assigned close to the start of the school year) Mike never thought there would be any opposition from parents. He was wrong. He had parents emailing him to complain that their child was not allowed go over to friends for a project. Some parents emailed just to confirm that he had actually assigned this project, “thinking that their child might have made up a lie to get out of the house.” He recalled the

situation being so bizarre; he had no idea that parents were so strict with their children or that sending them to their friend's house was a huge "no no" in their home. Many cultures expect parents to be highly protective —Mike pointed out that "they believe they need to protect their children from the big bad Canada—where drugs, sex, and alcohol are readily available." He went on to mention a quote from one of the parents: "I don't want my daughter to get raped or murdered at their friend's house, you can't trust anyone in this country." Mike believes that many other parents may also relate to this parent and fear what lingers outside of their home and would rather keep their child close to them at all times.

Another cultural element that came up was that many parents cannot be involved in their child's education because they do not fully understand the education system. Amy recalled one student saying that "her parents don't know how to read a report card or figure out the student's grade point average. Possibly the biggest difference between native-born and immigrant parents we work with is that the immigrant parents are often uncomfortable asking questions to teachers." She went on to say parents are unclear about the various roles and responsibilities within the education system. Amy said: "many of her students' parents did not attend school here in Canada, which causes them to feel intimidated by a whole new school system." Amy mentioned that many parents revealed to her that their "first child unfortunately becomes the guinea pig and from that child's mistakes they learn more about the school system and what improvement should be made for the next child." Amy suggested that because:

"Parents are not exposed to the school system they tend to take a backseat to their child's education. Many parents may come from the traditional schooling of rote

memory—making it difficult for them to agree with the way the school system operates.”

She said “it’s pretty simple to understand—if a parent does not understand the system then how on earth can they support it and advocate for it.” Culture undoubtedly plays a major role in the hindrance of parental involvement. Many parents have grown up with the notion to not get involved with the school’s way of teaching—which now causes hardship in a country where parental involvement is highly encouraged.

### *Socioeconomics*

Work is often a major cause that prevents parents from devoting time to their children’s education. Both Amy and Mike agreed that parents do not volunteer in the classroom because “they are either working or they have babies at home.” Amy noted that “in today’s economy, parents are forced to have to work two jobs in order to make ends meet.” She went on to say sometimes “meetings are held only during working hours – or at times inconvenient for parents. Families aren’t reimbursed for the time they take off of work to attend meetings.” Parents tend to be more focused on survival—“finding a stable job, a place to live, and trying the best to put food on the table.” Responsibilities of caring for children also interfere with low-income parents’ abilities to become involved. Additionally, transportation problems and lack of resources associated with lower-income families may obstruct parent involvement. In addition, Amy noted, some families are “forced to make frequent moves to new locations because of the high cost of living in Canada. This often means that parents are not focussed on, for example, their children’s regular school attendance.” And finally, Mike pointed out that “if parents struggle with trying to make ends meet at home and having a hard time to see to their child’s education

then there is no way they can afford to provide the necessary materials at home. Students need to spend time with workbooks, online educational games/websites, books, camps, and trips to enhance their learning.” But not every parent can provide these luxuries for his or her child. Mike mentioned “the biggest difference I see in EAL parents is that many of them cannot afford a tutor for their child and sometimes that is the best investment in the child.” It is sad reality that the SES of parents affects the education of children. Parents clearly struggle with finding time for their children’s education along with working and making ends meet for the family.

### *Time*

Time has to be the most important aspect that prevents parents from participating in school activities. Time is very different from all the other barriers. Time is unfortunately something that money cannot buy and that cannot be replaced. Many parents do not have the freedom to go and come—they are tied down to jobs that keep their time busy. With having two jobs or having to take another shift at work can make it quite impossible for parents to attend school functions or oversee their homework. Mike said: “some parents are anxious to take overtime work even if it means being away from home for longer hours...they believe it is what will help their child in the long run.” Mike referred to it as “a vicious cycle” that never seems to end—parents need to work three jobs to meet the financial needs of the family and to pay for all the necessities needed for a good education, but then loses all *time* with the child.

Amy pointed out that many families she has met “consist of 5-8 children, with that many children how can a parent manage a parent-teacher conference? Which children’s teachers do they choose to meet with? No parent in that position has time to

even help with homework or see to their schooling.” This significant barrier prevents parents from being involved and cause children to fall behind in the achievement scale.

### **Strategies/Practices Used by Teachers**

Both Mike and Amy have shared great and useful strategies during the interviews. They were both very insightful with explaining the ways they use these practices in their own classroom.

#### *Amy*

Amy shared a few useful examples of the practices she uses in her classroom that improves communication with the EAL parents. She believes that the best way to reach out to these parents is by learning about the ELL population. At the start of the school year she begins by getting to know what different ethnicities are represented in her class. She usually does this during the first weeks of school by gathering as much information about each family as possible. She uses a few “simple questions to help guide her search: 1) What countries do the families come from? 2) How many of your ELLs were born in Canada? 3) What languages do they speak? 4) Are any of the families migrants or refugees? 5) Find out if families have experienced war or any other traumatic event” Once that information has been gathered, Amy suggested that teachers should first turn to any colleagues that may be from the same country as your students’ families for help understanding the culture, language, etc. Amy also suggested that teachers should create and use a website that parents can refer to for any misunderstood information, upcoming events, tests, assignments, etc. The information on the website should be translated into multiple languages. She also advised teachers to plan and assign interactive and

educational projects or assignments for students to take home that will engage both parents and students. This way parents can get “involved and slowly realize that they can, in fact, be a part of their child’s homework.” Amy also explained that she often celebrates any child’s holiday in the class in the hopes that “parents will feel more comfortable with the school embracing their religion or culture...this one really goes a long way with both students and parents” Additionally, Amy always sends home parent teacher conference notices in the home language and informs parents that translators will be on-hand. She recommends using “Google Translate to translate notices into almost any language you can think of.” Another way to “trick parents into coming to events” is by involving their children in the events/programs “so that they feel the need to attend to watch their child shine.” Amy also shared that she always tried to inform parents on how the school system worked—“from the holidays, school rules, curriculum, materials, homework, use of the school library, EQAO, etc.” She said “keeping parents informed is the best way to get them to know what’s going on in the child’s life at school.” She ended by saying that if “a teacher makes an effort to reach out to parents then they will more than likely reciprocate.”

### *Mike*

Mike also shared a number of wonderful strategies from which other teachers may benefit. Similar to Amy, his first suggestion was to integrate cultural traditions of ELL families throughout the school. He said “always keep in mind when cultural or religious holiday are and don’t schedule anything around that time” (e.g.: exams, assignments, school events). He also advises teachers to have a multi-cultural day or days where parents are invited and bring in food, music, clothing, etc. from their home country. He

went on to say that he asked parents to come in and speak to the class about their native country or job—“this makes them feel important and needed around the school.” Mike spoke a little about the wide population of Muslims in his class and “being mindful that students who are fasting may be less energetic to participate, etc. Try to keep the homework to a bare minimum and avoid planning activities during these times.” Mike went on to say that he tries not to put a huge emphasis on Christmas as many other schools do, and that he treats it as any other holiday in the class. His next recommendation to teachers is to include bilingual books in the classroom for students to read. Another great practice is to “call parents at the beginning of the school year to offer them an open-door access to the classroom” as, Mike explained “this proved to be a great way to welcome parents.” Mike says that he tries to always “encourage parents to use their native language, whether it’s through reading or talking to their kids.” He also offered a piece of advice that makes him such a remarkable teacher: take the time to call home and inform parents of any progress—be it academic, social, or behavioral—the child has made. Mike noted:

“Throughout the school year I try to call parents to tell them that their son/daughter has been caught in the act of something good. Parents tend to look forward to my monthly calls about what good deed their child done. It gives them a feeling of pride to hear of their child doing good.”

And for other reason, parents “respected that I used simplified phrases to help them understand. If the parent did not understand then I would have a staff member call and relay the message in their language.” Both Amy and Mike have shared insightful practices that can be implemented by teachers.

**Strategies/Practices Used by the School**

Both teachers were asked to describe the effective strategies or practices employed by the schools that increased EAL parental involvement. These strategies are great for any school attempting to attract more involvement of EAL parents.

*Amy*

Amy was very proud of all the initiatives that her school took in order to bring in more EAL parents. Her first recommendation is a brilliant idea: “provide parents support groups or EAL classes that address both English language skills and information about the school system.” She explained that this took “a huge amount of effort from the staff” but the outcome was “amazing, parents showed up ready to learn English language skills and how to better support their children’s education.” Her school collaborated with a local university in order to provide general EAL classes for the adults.

Another great practice is providing “parents with an orientation session at the beginning of the school year. With a translator, explain and answer any questions about things such as EQAO, assessments, school expectations, etc. and have parents complete the needed forms. Enlighten parents about their expectations as parents with homework, school attendance, etc. Also it is a good time to share information about school supplies and any other information.” And after the orientation give parents a tour of the school—“introduce them to significant people that they are likely to see around the school, drop off/pick up locations, and sign in log.” This helps parents familiarize themselves with the school’s surroundings.

Next, Amy suggested that schools provide a welcoming environment for parents. In her school, the halls are covered with flags and maps from students’ native countries.

There is also signage in multiple languages displayed around the school to help parents find their way around. Amy believes that the “school’s ELLs should be visible because they are often treated as invisible. It is important for both the ELL and their families to see themselves in the school—on the walls, in the classrooms, in the curriculum, in the school-wide events, etc.”

*Mike*

Mike also shared a few effective strategies that his school has employed over the years. The first practice he shared is the annual Back to School BBQ/Meet the Teacher Night that his school holds for the parents and staff. This BBQ is a very informal environment where teachers are expected to even bring their own families along. This “makes the environment so much less school-ish and more fun.” Another thing that the school provided at the BBQ is the guarantee of Halal meat for their huge population of Muslim families. Mike recalled the first year the school held a BBQ and remembered how successful it all was for the school and the large turnout of immigrant parents. “This low key environment starts the year out nice and easy” and leaves a “memorable” effect on the parents.

Another very important practice that the principal of Mike’s school encourages is reaching out to parents who were unable to attend a parent teacher conference and still giving them a progress report for their child. Mike reported that every year he convinces a few parents to attend the next parent teacher conference.

Mike also shared the idea of organizing guest speakers to come to the school to cover topics of interest to the parents—coverage for additional health benefits, healthy lunches, homework help, literacy at home, bullying, immigration, how to use Google, etc.

This helps parents feel comfortable coming to the school and “feel as if the school is looking out for their own benefit.”

Mike explained the process of conducting an information session about EQAO tests for the parents, covering topics such as: “general information, parents’ tips, school plan for the testing days, test-taking anxiety, and answer any questions.” Parents always left knowing how to help their child prepare for the EQAO test.

The next great strategy Mike’s school is heavily involved in is the professional development they have readily available for their teachers. Through these training sessions, teachers are taught how to work effectively with parents. Teachers should be able to share experiences or concerns and then discuss and reflect on how to handle each situation if placed in it again. Ideally this would include a tutorial on to use new parental involvement strategies and a structured plan of how to implement it. Mike pointed out that in order for schools to increase parental involvement they must be knowledgeable on how to do so.

As mentioned before, research on practices and strategies used by schools is hard to find. Using these teacher-friendly practices teachers can now resolve any future problems they might face with teacher-parent communication.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This research study has been a rewarding and enlightening experience for me as a researcher and future teacher. I have grown, and I have learned a significant number and variety of strategies and practices from the research participants for use in the classroom. This chapter addresses reflections on the findings, limitations of the study, implications for practice and recommendations for further study.

### Reflections

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, my interest in this area of research began while I was a teacher candidate in New York where I witnessed firsthand how much both teacher and the ELL students struggled in the classroom—the teacher being unable to assist all the ELL students due to the needs of the entire classroom; and in so doing leaving behind the student who desperately needs the one-on-one support to go unnoticed. Being a teacher who always gravitated towards the students who needed that extra support, I needed to find a few alternate avenues to help these students in whatever way possible.

As a teacher candidate I have heard endless amounts of complaints from teachers about parents never showing up to school events. Teachers were always disappointed to see that there was a huge absence of parents at school events, and that disappointment grew when they saw that it was almost always the parents of ELL students who did not attend parent teacher conferences and other school events. Teachers struggle with finding ways to encourage parents to attend school events, especially the parent-teacher conference. After endless tries, many teachers unfortunately tend to lose hope in the parents and stop seeking their involvement. And many times when the teacher loses hope in the parents, the teacher also loses hope in the child. Amy refers to this as “the

unfortunate truth,.” teachers tend to pay less attention to students when they perceive that their families “aren’t interested.” Mike says that this is “of course unfair but there are some teachers out there who hold grudges against innocent kids.”

On the other side of the coin, are those parents who are extremely interested in the child’s education but cannot communicate with the teacher or school due to the prevalent language barrier, leaving both parent and teacher frustrated. Both are then at a loss on how to surpass the language barrier that keeps the parents from expressing their contribution and interest in their child’s education.

Through my exposure of working in various classrooms, I am wholeheartedly aware of the neglect and challenges faced by ELL students. I began this research with the intent of helping to build a better foundation to ensure greater success for the education of these ELL students. Through this research and the numerous strategies shared by the wonderful participants, I hope to eliminate just one of the many hurdles these students face. Ultimately, I hope that this research can bridge the communication gap between parents and teachers. And by bridging this substantial gap, I will be giving the ELL students a better chance at succeeding in school.

This study analyzed how we can increase an ELL student’s parental involvement to better their education. The results from this study does support the previous research mentioned in Chapter 2 in which parental involvement is a must for all students in order to achieve academic success.

### **Implications for Practice**

I believe that every teacher can benefit from this research. There is a high chance that every teacher who is teaching in the Greater Toronto Area will have more than one

ELL student in their classroom. And with this possibility, teachers need to be trained and equipped to communicate with all parents in their classroom. My study has sparked many great instructional how-to's concerning parental involvement. Subsequent implementation of these effective strategies will help foster positive relations between teacher and parent. To sum up the strategies mentioned in Chapter 4 by Amy and Mike:

1. Get to know the different ethnicities represented in class
2. Create and use a classroom website. Make sure it uses multiple languages
3. Create assignments that require parental involvement
4. Use Google Translate to translate notices that go home
5. Involve ELL students in events/programs
6. Inform parents on the school system
7. Celebrate all cultural or religious holidays
8. Avoid scheduling important due/test dates around holidays
9. Invite parents to speak to class
10. Treat Christmas like any other holiday
11. Offer parents an open-door access policy
12. Phone home with details about student's good behaviour instead of misbehaviour

### **Limitations and Further Study**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this research has two major limitations. First, is the sample size of the research sample. I believe my research would have been more effective if the number of participants was increased. With a larger size of participants I

would have gained more insight into the effects that the lack of parental involvement had on students and a larger collection of strategies.

The second limitation was the absence of parent voices in this study. Because this research includes only teachers, the data is may be skewed and as they do not take into consideration the perspective of the parents. Perhaps with the parents' input, the study would have been more effective in detailing exactly what parents are thinking about the school and what barriers they face to attending school events.

In conclusion, it is important that teachers receive guidance in supporting EAL parents and increasing parental involvement in their classroom. Schools need to provide more professional development sessions to help teachers learn new and effective strategies on countering the lack of parental involvement. In addition, teachers who find they are struggling to generate the involvement of parents should not feel at a loss—this research along with many others can shed light on how to handle the situation and provide extremely helpful and practical strategies to use in the classroom.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview Questions

#### Introduction

1. How many years have you been a teacher? Of those years how many have involved teaching ELL students?
2. In your experience, are the parents of your ELL students also ELL themselves? How do you think that affects the student's performance?

#### Parental involvement

3. Research has proven that children with parents who are highly involved in their learning process demonstrate higher learning achievement. What are your views in this respect? To what extent do you think parental involvement plays a role in students' success at school?
4. In your experience, are the parents of ELL students more, less, or equally involved in the learning process (at home or classroom) than the parents of English speaking students? Explain?
5. For the parents of ELL students, what factors do you think contribute or limit their level of involvement in their child's learning process?
6. What methods do you use to involve the parents of your students in their learning process (i.e.: behaviour and performance)? Do these methods differ and how when dealing with the parents of your ELL students?
7. Do you find it challenging to involve the parents of ELL students with their child's learning process? If so, how are those challenges different from an English-native speaking parent?

#### Parental Communication

8. What methods of communication do you use when dealing with the parents of your students? Do these methods differ and how when dealing with the parents of your EAL students? In what ways do you adjust your communication methods for parents of EAL students?
9. Do you find it challenging to communicate with the parents of ELL students? If so, what are these challenges? What are the biggest challenges you face with respect to communication with your EAL parents?

#### Closing

10. What advice would you give to teachers to help them better involve the parents of ELL students?
11. What advice would you give to teachers to help them better communicate with the parents of ELL students?

**Appendix B: Letter of Consent for Interview**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Rabeena Haniff, a Master of Teaching student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am studying the parental involvement of ELL students for the purposes of a investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Arlo Kempf. My research supervisor is also Dr. Arlo Kempf. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 45 minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher name: Rabeena Haniff  
Phone number, email: 647-303-4399, Rhaniff87@gmail.com

Instructor's Name: Dr. Arlo Kempf  
Email: arlo.kempf@utoronto.ca

Research Supervisor's Name: Dr. Arlo Kempf  
Email: arlo.kempf@utoronto.ca

**Consent Form**

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I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Rabeena Haniff and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_