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# Benefits of a Parent Involvement Plan for Second Grade Students

Mila Hart

*Central Washington University*

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BENEFITS OF A PARENT INVOLVEMENT PLAN  
FOR SECOND GRADE STUDENTS

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A Project Report  
Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education  
Master Teacher

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by  
Mila Hart  
July 2008

## Abstract

The benefits of a parent involvement plan for second grade students were researched. Students, whose parents were actively involved in their education, did better in school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Most parents want what is best for their child and will provide the support needed when encouraged and shown how to be involved with their child in school. Active parent involvement can be facilitated by a parent handbook combined with an open house, follow-up workshops that provide helpful information to parents, and frequent and regular communication via phone, progress reports, e-mail, home visits, and formal or informal conferences (Epstein et al., 2002).

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## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

This research project was designed to create a parent involvement plan that includes a useable handbook written in English and Spanish, workshops, and regular communication between the parents and the teacher of second grade children enrolled in the author's classroom. The handbook consists of several different sections created to aid parents in understanding grade-level curriculum and to suggest ways to help their child. The parent involvement plan was created for students enrolled in the author's second grade classroom and could apply across the school district to other second grade classrooms. The parent involvement plan will have significant value in the classrooms when used as a complete plan. This includes: an open house for parents, follow-up parent workshops, an informational handbook, and contact via phone, e-mail, home visits, or direct parent to teacher contact at school. The open house will serve as a format to discuss the handbook and its content and as a question and answer session for parents. The follow-up workshops and contact will serve as a method to provide an avenue for an exchange of information and ideas that could guide parents and teachers

in successful support of the child at school and at home and to welcome and invite parents to be actively involved in their child's education. Research showed that the more informed and involved parents were in their child's education, the better the child did in school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). It was shown that written and oral communication helped parents gain awareness of practices occurring in the classroom (ProjectAppleseed, National Campaign for Public School Improvement, 2006).

#### PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to provide parents, as well as educators, with a parent involvement plan that includes helpful information that can further the educational, behavioral, and social development of their child. It will provide direct contact between teacher and parent in an open house setting to introduce the handbook, as well as, direct contact between teacher and parent in follow-up workshops and meetings.

The handbook consists of several sections of general information, expectations, curriculum, and specific monthly plans of instruction. Research showed that handbooks allowed parents to be more involved and the more involved parents were the more likely they were to motivate their

children to increase their learning (ProjectAppleseed, National Campaign for Public School Improvement, 2006). With an open house format, workshops, and follow-up contact between parents and teacher, the success of the project will be increased. The open house meeting will allow an introduction to enable parents to get an overview of the school year. It will also allow parents to become familiar with the handbook and help set the stage for future parent meetings.

The workshops will help families support their child as a student. The format will be one that provides information to all families. Even those who cannot attend the meetings at school will benefit from receiving written communication about the meetings (Epstein, J. L., 2002). In the author's district, that information will be available in both English and Spanish.

Follow-up communication is important. One way to do this is to send home a weekly progress report. A critical element for successful parent involvement is two-way communication with the parent (Wherry, 2003). The English/Spanish translated report should go home and be returned the next day with a parent signature and/or comment (Epstein, 2002).

Another successful way to communicate with parents is through the use of electronic mail (e-mail). In a 2004 report by Fishcer, E-mail has been tried and found successful as a form of parent contact that invites communication without the child being the middle man. Parents can receive reliable, complete accounts from teachers every Friday or whenever correspondence is needed. In one school, "the essentials of the student's productivity and accomplishments that week -- including information about homework completion, test and project scores, major upcoming assignments, and classroom behavior -- were related with consistent clarity" (Fischer, 2004, p.2). In general, this school's experience is that students whose parents used regular e-mail communication were likely to perform at a higher level than through midterm phone calls or weekly written communication reports alone (Fischer, 2004). However, it must be cautioned that not all parents have access to e-mail or prefer not to use it. It is simply another form of communication that might be available and/or acceptable to some parents. In the author's school, which is considered a low socio-economic school as evidenced by 70.1 percent free and reduced lunch, this could be a problematic form of communication.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

Research showed that readily available parent information helped parents to become more involved in their child's education and that involved parents helped to increase motivation and learning for young elementary school children (Arbor, 1993).

This parent involvement plan makes use of a handbook which is available in both Spanish and English and will be significant because it will serve as a tool to help parents work with their children at home. It clearly shows guidelines which in turn will support parents to help students improve academically, behaviorally, and socially. This handbook consists of sections that should prove to be informative including simple guidelines, tips, and techniques for parents to work with their children. It contains information about school including behavior through the Make Your Day citizenship program, expected levels of achievement, topics and subjects taught, management procedures, weekly progress reports, and homework practices. National, state and district standards are considered. Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), Grade Level Expectations (GLEs), and district curriculum and key ideas will be used as a guide to

parents. In addition, it contains parenting tips and information about stages of growth and development of seven and eight year olds. It provides information about community resources for families in need of assistance. It is divided into sections for each month of the year that show parents exactly what is being taught, what their child needs to know, and how they can help at home. Research has shown that when parents are kept informed and involved in their children's education, their children were more likely to be successful in school (Arbor, 1993). This handbook is just another tool to be used in the parent involvement plan. Parents can get involved in their child's education in countless ways. Meeting with their child's teacher is another way to increase parent involvement (Joice, P. & Childress, M., 2004).

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

The limitations of the project include possible lack of parent involvement which might be remedied with sincere and respectful outreach, lack of parent ability to read and comprehend language which will be counteracted by English and Spanish translation of all written materials and through the use of interpreters during oral communication. Another potential limitation is that parent involvement

programs often lack overall organization. A well planned, effective format will help to eliminate wasted effort (Simic, 1991). In addition, the handbook, the open house format, and the follow-up workshops and meetings are only a starting point to parental involvement. Teachers and parents must have the initiative and the desire to work together for the child's education. This project only serves to make communication between parent and teacher easier and more inviting. It also was limited to the parents in the author's school district's second grade classrooms.

#### *Challenges of Parent Involvement*

Some of the challenges of parent involvement are low income families, unfamiliarity with English language, special education students, and working parents. Parents may simply choose not to participate. Although the Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) have made parent involvement a national priority, there are still many obstacles to overcome (Baker & Soden, 1998). It appears that some schools and teachers are successful while others are not. According to research at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, when schools, families, and

community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2004).

In the author's school, there are a few factors that need to be considered which include: low income families, unfamiliarity with English language, special education students, and working parents.

Low income families are prevalent. The author's school is over 70 percent free and reduced lunch indicating a low socio-economic status or poverty school (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2006). It is not completely clear if socio-economic status is related to parent involvement. Some studies conflict as to whether parents of low socio-economic status are less involved and parents of high socioeconomic status are more involved in their child's education (Jeter-Twilley, Legum, & Norton, 2007). However, most studies show that low socio-economic parents tend to be less involved.

The other factor to be considered is that the author's school is made up of over 54 percent second language learners - primarily Spanish speaking. It has a migrant level of 28.7 percent (Office of the Superintendent of

Public Instruction, 2006). This high percentage of Spanish speaking parents creates the need for a Spanish translation of the handbook and any other written material, as well as, an interpreter for oral communication. The handbook and written materials will need to be created and interpreted at the beginning of every school year as schedules, information, and curriculum frequently change. This handbook will not only need to be a literal translation into Spanish, but also a cultural connection as well. It also creates the need for an effective method to invite participation across cultures. Research indicates that some of the best ways to increase parent involvement are in the form of outreach. Making personal connections, home visits, and personal interactions in the form of becoming aware of poverty issues, basic survival needs, and even transportation to school meetings helps address the issues of parent involvement (Lopez, 2004). In addition, an effective approach to understanding and celebrating cultural strengths is evident in the program called Funds of Knowledge. Teachers visit the homes of their students to visit and actually conduct research. "The focus of the home visit is to gather details about the accumulated knowledge base that each household assembles in order to ensure its

own subsistence" (Gonzalez et al., 1993, p.1). The teachers then get together in reflective study groups to analyze the households of their students and come up with meaningful units of study. "Based on their experiences in the households and the study groups, teachers form curriculum units that tap into the household funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez et al., 1993, p. 1). Parents become involved in the process as the importance and validity of their own household knowledge is recognized. This opens up new opportunities for communication and trust between parents and the school (Gonzalez et al., 1993).

Another area, special education students, has its own considerations. In the author's school, 8.7 percent of students are enrolled in special education (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2006). Family support is important for all students and maybe even more so for special education students. Students are often pulled out of the classroom for long periods during the day. Parents need to be informed and kept aware of what is happening in their child's education here as well (Newman, 2005).

Parents who work all day are another area to be considered when thinking about parent involvement. Parent meetings, conferences, and calls need to be scheduled in

advance so that time off from work can be arranged. A parent handbook alone may be helpful, but may not be enough to help parents become involved in their child's education.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

Specific terms necessary for the understanding of this research project are as follows:

Curriculum - planned instruction that is taught in a manner to support students in achieving expected outcomes of specific knowledge and skills (Pennsylvania State Board Of Education, 2005).

Make Your Day Citizenship program - district-wide citizenship policy. Make Your Day is a philosophy that helps children develop an internal locus of control so that they become aware of their actions and begin to take responsibility for their behavior (Brown, 2006).

Parent Involvement - making parents aware of what is going on at school through monitoring with open-houses, school programs, informal conversations; through informing by keeping parents informed about the procedures and expectations of school and classroom through home visits, parent teacher conferences, phone calls, weekly progress reports; and

through participation of parents actively involved in classroom and/or school (Simic, 1991).

Parent Workshops - meetings about school related topics held at a school at particular times. These meetings will increase parent ability to help their child learn (example: training provided by Title I teachers to teach parents correct ways to prompt child learning to read). "Workshop may also mean making information about a topic available in a variety of forms that can be viewed, heard, or read any where, any time, in varied forms" (Epstein, 2002, p. 1).

Weekly progress report - an individualized weekly report that informs parents of their child's progress. This report is a two-way communication with a place for parent comment and signature (Epstein, 2002).

#### PROJECT OVERVIEW

Chapter One includes the background, purpose, significance, limitations, and definition of terms of this research project. Chapter Two focuses on a review of literature. In Chapter Three, the background of the project, project procedure, project development, and project implementation are examined. In Chapter Four, the benefits and layout of the handbook are detailed.

Chapter Five summarizes, concludes, and makes various recommendations for the research and project.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

In chapter two, the author looks at the history and benefits of parent communication and involvement, as well as, the lack of opportunities for parent involvement and considers the dissemination of information and encouragement of parent involvement through the use of parent handbooks and written material.

#### History of Parent Involvement

The process of informing parents of classroom practices and expectations has been a priority for many years. Parents have been involved in their children's education since schooling began; however, affirming the significance of parent involvement became a priority with the founding of a formal organization in 1897. At that time an organization, The National Congress of Mothers, was created to support parent involvement in schools (Wallace, 2002). In those days, parents were not nearly as informed as they are today. This organization, The Congress of Mothers, soon became the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations in 1908.

However, even later in the 1920's, the importance of parental involvement was deemed a pertinent issue. Then, in 1924, it changed to the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. It is now known as the Parent Teacher Association, or the PTA. The PTA's responsibility was and is to protect the educational, health and well being of children. This organization also sought to interest parents in the school life of their children, and to enable teachers to know the home life of their pupils so that that the child could be understood and taught better (Wallace, 2002).

By 1996, The United States Department of Education submitted a proposal for National Education Goals that support the research that parental involvement in school improves student learning (Wallace, 2002).

Yet while parents are at present often kept somewhat informed and aware of what goes on in the classroom, the practice is still unsuccessful in many instances. Research shows overwhelmingly that parent involvement in their child's learning is positively related to learning (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989).

A highly successful practice originating at the University of Arizona called the Funds of Knowledge

provides an enticing and successful view of parent involvement. Researchers attempted to collect the history of the family and the student's life. The history not only included the origins of the family but also most importantly the history of their labor. "Funds of knowledge refers to those historically developed and accumulated strategies (e.g., skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household's functioning and well-being (Gonzalez et al., 1993, p. 1). This information then alters the view of the student from a view of what the child does not know and lacks to a view of focusing on the knowledge these students bring to school and using it as a foundation for their learning. "This emphasis on so-called disadvantages has provided justification for lowered academic expectations and inaccurate portrayals of these children and their families" (Gonzalez et al., 1993, p. 2).

Interestingly, the success of the program came from when the teachers rather than the researchers began to conduct the interviews. The teachers became the learners and as a result a feeling of mutual trust between families and school occurred. For the teachers "learning about human cultures must occur empathetically and emotionally as well

as conceptually or cognitively," (Gonzalez et al., 1993, p. 2). When this happens a truer understanding between cultures is the result. This did not happen with the researchers; but only with the one-on-one interaction of parent and teacher with a common interest of the child.

An exciting result of this type of interaction is the dispelling of the feeling that poverty is the root of many problems and that fixing it is insurmountable. Now with the new communication and resulting understanding that takes place this hopeless feeling is lessened by the new empowerment of cultural understanding and raised expectations. Without actually visiting and researching the home-life, it is impossible for teachers to actually create lessons that build on the student's background knowledge. "Any of the numerous funds of knowledge found within the households could form the basis for curriculum units in science, math, language arts, and other subjects" (Gonzalez et al., 1993, p. 9). Making the real world connections between school and home meaningful reflects back to Dewey's reflexive and progressive education classrooms.

Joan Wink, PhD., professor at California State University, adds that Funds of Knowledge have a Vygotskyian element. That is, students can perform at a higher level in

their home or community environment because these environments encourage risk taking and problem solving strategies. She states that "Funds of knowledge include all of the knowledge of families. It is the situatedness of what a family must do to live and even thrive in a particular location. The same is true in classrooms; communities of learners generate their own situated knowledge when they are allowed to" (Wink, 2008).

Another study by Hughes et al. (1994) looked at parents' views about their primary child's education and the communication from the school. They found that the most common form of communication was a parent newsletter of which every parent had received at least one. Parent evenings accounted for 84 percent and parents helping with homework accounted for 83 percent. Parent teacher Association (PTA) meetings and social events were attended by 81 percent of parents and 76 percent of parents had been in direct contact with the child's teacher at one time or another.

The advent of parent-teacher conferences did much to open the doors of communication. However, they alone did not provide much information about the day to day workings of a classroom and its expectations of parent involvement.

Phone calls and communication to parents were also expected of teachers. Unfortunately, the reality for primary teachers is that this communication is mainly done at the end of the teaching day. "Thus, there is a discrepancy between the way in which teachers are expected to develop links with parents and the official time available to do it" (Hancock, 1998, p. 400). It therefore has become rather commonplace to provide at least a general outline of expectations in primary classrooms by sending home an informational packet at the beginning of the school year. Unfortunately, these packets, in general, are of somewhat limited value as they are merely a shallow overview of the classroom rules.

Another study by the U.S. Department of Education's Prospect's Study in 1993, shows that students in schools with learning compacts perform higher than students in schools without them. Learning compacts are written agreements that state the responsibilities of different individuals who are involved in the child's education. This usually includes the parents, the teacher(s), the principal, and the student. These responsibilities, such as a parent assisting with homework, a child completing assigned homework, or a teacher providing quality

instruction, are designed to help in the education of the child. They are discussed as a group and then signed and dated. It is believed that this is stronger than other types of reinforcement of learning at home

(ProjectAppleseed, National Campaign for Public School Improvement, 2006).

Parent involvement in children's education has been well-documented over the past several decades. It benefits students, parents, and teachers (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Research has demonstrated that parent involvement not only leads to gains in student achievement, it also increases student graduation rates, improves students' self-esteem, behavior and motivation, creates a more positive attitude toward school among parents and students; and increases parent satisfaction with teachers (Green and Tichenor, 2003, p. 1).

Of course, parents are as busy as teachers. Also many parents do not know how to get involved. Parent handbooks, an open house at the beginning of the year, and follow-up parent-teacher meetings, then, are a great start to this process by providing information to parents.

### Benefits of Parent Involvement

A parent handbook seeks to go supplement parent conferences or informational handouts to help keep parents informed. It provides clear guidelines that will provide parents with explicit information they will need to help their children become successful. It can be referred to again and again. It also gives many ways to help parents get involved in their child's classroom. By providing a highly informational handbook in conjunction with a parent open house in which the handbook and its guidelines for parent involvement are set up, and follow-up workshops and parent-teacher meetings, the goal of providing more opportunity for parent communication can clearly be met.

Educational theorist, John Dewey, supports parental involvement. In his book, Experience and Education (Dewey, 1938), he promotes progressive education, that is, education based upon the rapidly and ever-changing world. He claims that educational philosophy involves opposition between traditional education and progressive education. It is important to educate parents in order for them to understand what the educational system is like. They must understand it before they can be actively involved in it.

He believed that educators must learn how to respond to the ever-changing world by making material relevant to the student, and making the student more involved with his or her learning (Dewey, 1938). Once parents understand this, they can broaden their student's experiences at home as well as understand experiences in the classroom setting.

Through informational parent meetings, parents can play a vital role in these experiences by providing guided learning at home and also when they come in for classroom visits. Once the basic philosophy is learned during parent education meetings, parents will have more tools with which to apply these understandings (Dewey, 1938).

Dewey's beliefs fit well into other areas of the classroom setting. It is the job of the educator to make the experience so valuable and engaging that the activity promotes future positive experiences. The educator needs to keep in mind that the more an experience is a development from within, by, and for, then the more clearly understood that experience is (Dewey, 1938). By mutual education of teachers and parents about each other's culture, and through regular meetings and parent/teacher generated newsletters that provide ideas and tips, educators can move

toward achieving the goals of progressive education with strong parent involvement.

There is a need for parents as well as educators to understand what truly beneficial experiences for students are. It is relatively easy to plan fun and interesting experiences. However, to plan experiences that have real world and cultural value and that help the learner become engaged in lifelong learning, as well as, build and connect to future learning experiences indeed takes time, thought, and knowledge (Dewey, 1938). Educators must know students and their families and their past experiences to provide experiences that are unique to each individual. Home visits that seek this information (Gonzalez et al., 1993) and parent meetings are a way to get to know families. What is valid for one student may not be for another.

Parents play a key role in providing a vast array of personal experiences that will then be used as prior knowledge. Dewey warns that progressive education must not be merely impulse and desire, but that a plan and method of activity be in place (Dewey, 1938). Parent involvement can help make these connections more easily understood by making connections to school experiences with prior knowledge from the student's own experiences.

To achieve purposeful parent involvement in the classroom, there must be an education of and understanding by parents of how a progressive classroom works. They must also understand their role in it and how they might best help their child at school and at home (Dewey, 1938).

Further benefits to parental involvement are cited in a study of standards-based reform practices done by Westat and Policy Studies Associates (2001) for the U.S. Department of Education. This study examined 71 Title I elementary schools. Title I is a federal program for elementary and secondary schools that is aimed at improving the academic skills of low economic status students. One of the variables analyzed was outreach to parents in various forms. The outreach to parents measured how much teachers communicated with parents through face to face meetings, sending home materials on ways to help their child, and routine telephone calls whether their child was having problems or not. This form of progressive education that relates to real world cultures and situations and connects the school to the family can be very successful. The researchers found that this parental outreach was related to improved student achievement in reading and math. In

fact, test scores grew at a rate that was 40 percent higher than in low outreach schools.

In a 1998 study of 335 Title I students in nine schools in West Virginia, students of parents who attended parent workshops were shown to make gains in reading and math with greater gains made by children in grades 2 - 4 than in middle or junior high school. Students from lower-income families while making fewer gains than students from higher-income families made more gains than students whose parents did not attend the workshops as measured on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (Shaver and Walls, 1998).

In general, programs that work alongside of parents to mutually share ideas that help in educating their children at home tend to have positive effects. Achievement increased directly with the extent that the parents were involved in the programs as shown by studies that compared the level of involvement (Shaver and Walls, 1998).

#### Special Education

Lynn Newman (2005) discussed satisfaction of parents of children with disabilities. In an article reflecting upon the research study, Facts from OSEP's (U. S. Office of

Special Education Programs) National Longitudinal Studies, she found that most parents of special education students are satisfied with most aspects of the schooling of their children including communication about how their child is doing behaviorally and academically when rated on a four point scale. Eighty-six to ninety percent of parents were satisfied with the overall education and with their children's teachers (Newman, 2005). However, up to twenty-two percent of parents are dissatisfied with the amount of information they receive regarding their child's behavior and academic performance. This is higher than for parents of students in general education depending on the disability with the highest percentage being for emotionally disturbed children (Newman, 2005). There appears to be a need for greater communication in the area of special education especially for students with emotional disabilities. Communication between parents and teachers is the key to easing this concern.

#### Low/High Socio-economic Status

Caution must be considered when looking at various studies. A study was done by Jeter-Twilley, Legum, and Norton (2007) to determine whether or not there was a relationship between socio-economic status and parent

involvement. Ten schools were chosen from all elementary schools in a Mid-Atlantic state's county based upon socio-economic status determined by Free and Reduced Meals Statistics (FARMS) for each school. The five lowest and the five highest were chosen for comparison. Parent involvement was based on PTA attendance at the first and consecutive meetings. This study found that there was a statistically significant difference with higher attendance at the higher socio-economic schools than at the lower socio-economic schools (Jeter-Twilley, Legum, & Norton, 2007). Based on this study, there appears to be a difference in parent involvement in schools due to socio-economic status. However, this study just shows that some parents were willing to attend PTA meetings and pay the fee. It really does not indicate how much parental involvement is taking place. It also does not address the consideration of multiculturalism and individual preferences for parental involvement in their child's education.

In a 1989 report by Cotton and Wikelund, researchers discovered that low-income parents were not as involved in school. There were many reasons for this: lack of time and energy due to long hours of hard physical labor, embarrassment over their own educational level,

embarrassment over their own linguistic ability, lack of understanding or information about how the school system works, perceived lack of welcome by the school staff, and school staff assumption that they are not interested in their child's education. It was also determined however, that these parents can and do make positive contributions when they are given training in important types of parent involvement regardless of their own level of education. The report states that care must be taken to emphasize that parents are partners rather than people with little to offer. It should not be viewed as a deficit model, but a good working relationship between school and home. It should be noted that when parent attitudes about school and their ability to help their child improve, parents then begin to give even more of their time and support. This report indicates that the involvement of parents from higher socio-economic status has not been shown to be more beneficial than the involvement of less-advantaged, lower socio-economic status parents (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989).

#### Bilingual Communities

Alma Flor Ada states in her 1993 report that we need to acknowledge the limitations of education and change our teaching to accommodate the needs of diverse cultures and

thereby have more powerful teaching to the children we want to educate. She urges educators to see the child as a whole being connected to home, family and school. Schools must not minimize the family life. Educators must keep the child's culture alive, and as Dewey (1938), also admonishes, make the education related to real life (Ada, 1993; Dewey, 1938). Lack of parent/teacher communication furthers the feeling that they cannot help their child in school which is experienced by many bilingual community members. In addition, the discrepancy between what schools promote as acceptable and expected behavior and the home culture causes inner conflict within the student. They can then perceive that their own family and culture is not acceptable. To counteract this tendency schools must value and affirm the home-life and culture of each student by encouraging questioning and discovery of real world issues. When there is authentic effort to involve families with the teacher, teachers come to realize the lifelong knowledge that the families have. Some suggestions that Ada makes are: ensuring the development of the student's native language for interaction between home and school by using it for correspondence as well as, in the classroom for poetry, stories, etc; acknowledging the parent's lives,

knowledge, and experiences by validating the informal education they have (example: graduating from the University of Life); facilitating communication at home by encouraging children to discuss and seek information from their parents; encouraging parents and students as authors by writing their own books on a mutually interesting topic; and encouraging the parents and students to act for their own liberation by becoming authors not merely of books but of their own lives (Ada, 1993).

Bilingual students have additional obstacles to overcome. In a report about parent involvement in the Hispanic community, Nancy Hyslop (2000) states that there are several problems faced by Hispanic parents. Some Hispanic parents are unaware of how to help their children develop academic skills. They may not know what the school expects from their child. They also may have lower self-esteem because they may have been unsuccessful in school themselves. This could create anxiety and with a language barrier, they may feel even more powerless to help their child. Another concern is that often Hispanic parents see the teacher as the expert and are reluctant to question the teacher's expertise. Hyslop adds that there is also the process of acculturation that can put some parents in

culture shock. Hyslop quotes a study by Kelty (1997) that found that because the Hispanic culture is one of obedience to parents, the parents communicate in a direct style instead of fostering curiosity by talking to and reading to their child. This may hinder the laying of a strong foundation for academic skills necessary for successful schooling (Hyslop, 2000).

In a New Jersey elementary school study by Joshi, Eberly, and Konzal, (2005), the authors point out that the need for true understanding across all diverse cultures is critical. They also warn not to jump to conclusions based on a person's race or ethnicity. Several factors go into a person's culture including "historical context, geographical location, gender, generation, age, religion, group memberships, and level of education" (Joshi, Eberly, and Konzal, 2005, p. 11). These variables all combine to create the individual's culture.

#### Successful Parent Involvement

Bringing the mountain to Mohammed is the suggestion of Gerardo Lopez (2004) in an article about the difficulties faced by migrant children. Migrant children and their families have overwhelming obstacles to overcome including poverty, limited English proficiency, family survival which

often forces children to drop out of school to work at an early age, harsh living conditions, and high mobility and relocation to different schools which necessitates learning to navigate new curricula, teachers, friendships, and testing practices every time there is a move (Lopez, 2004). Migrant parents tend not to become involved in traditional parent involvement activities.

However, rather than accepting poor academic performance, some schools began to implement research-proven suggestions from the University of Texas at Austin with the assistance of the Migrant Office at the Texas Education Agency (Lopez, 2004). Instead of parents coming to school to get involved in activities such as PTA/PTO, bake sales, parent-teacher conferences, these pro-active schools found ways to reach out to help migrant parents cope with their problems on a daily basis. There are many problems such as little or no food to eat, living in cars or tiny travel trailers, no electricity, heat, running water, or sewage/septic systems were a primary concern. These situations left little time for parents to think about traditional school involvement. The school personnel made a commitment of at least one home visit per year. Migrant families highly valued that type of personal

communication. A tremendous amount of time was spent by school personnel meeting with every migrant family. The paradigm shift was from parents serving the schools to the schools helping the families and serving the parents in a respectful and non-judgmental way. In addition, parent education meetings did not follow the traditional training to show parents how to help their children, but instead were "seen as a vehicle to broaden parent's cultural capital, enhancing their ability to improve their lives and to gain access to employment options other than migratory work" (Lopez, 2004, p. 144).

Nancy Hyslop (2000) reports that although there are challenges facing Hispanic parents, when provided with a chance to learn how to help their child academically, these parents were able to do so willing and effectively. Hyslop cites several programs that have effectively helped Hispanic parents including: eighteen states with Newcomer Programs for both students and parents; a Texas school with pre-kindergarten parent/child literacy workshops; the Intergenerational Literacy Project started in 1993 which utilizes a local university that provides adult and family literacy support; Project FLAME (Family Literacy: Apprendiendo, Mejorando, Educando [Learning, Improving,

Educating]) developed in 1989 by Rodriguez-Brown and Shanahan which helps to train parents in different literacy strategies to support learning at home by providing literacy opportunities, positive parent role modeling, improving parent literacy skills, and improving parent/school relationships; and AVANCE which is a preschool parenting program in San Antonio that brings low-income Hispanic mothers with young children to a day care that provides developmental and educational activities (Hyslop, 2000).

Another successful program is the Latino Family Literacy Project, (2007), in Pajaro Valley, California. The Pajaro Valley School District received an award for school based parent-involvement initiatives. "Whether it is developing family reading routines, building English language skills or ensuring that families feel a closer connection to their schools, Pajaro Valley exemplifies the benefits of an engaged parent involvement effort" (The Latino Family Literacy Project, 2007, p.1) This program is an effective program that works with the family by combining the strategies of early childhood intervention, increased adult literacy, parenting strategies, and parental support for school functions. This program warns against other well

intentioned programs that operate on the basis of the deficit model which assumes that parents have nothing to offer; the research vacuum model where more research is needed to prove the most effective forms of parent involvement; the silent gendered discourse where women tend to be put in subservient roles instead of being empowered to see their own experiences as valid and to analyze their own literacy; and the missing social constructivist perspective which does not acknowledge the importance of real world and social issues in educational development. The Pajaro School District instead promotes family literacy. Parents and teachers meet at the local library every month to read aloud a children's book. After the reading, a teacher from the school and family members discuss the book.

Through discussions of children's literature parents explore new strategies to develop children's reading and writing skills and contribute to their own learning. Parents reflect on their own lives as a source of knowledge and are encouraged to understand that they are critical to their children's development regardless of their schooling (Ada, 1993). With their newly acquired skills, parents read to their children

and question them about their understanding of the story using description, personal interpretation, analysis, and creativity (The Latino Family Literacy Project, 2007, p. 3).

Parent/teacher involvement is considered on a different level with two programs that satisfy the requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Sec. 1118. Parent Involvement). Teacher Expectations & Student Achievement (TESA) is an internationally successful program. Parent Expectations Support Achievement (PESA) was developed by the Los Angeles County Office of Education in 1996 to be a companion program to TESA (Los Angeles County Office of Education, 2001.)

These are programs that help teachers and parents insure that their interactions with children are positive and helpful. These programs can be used together to promote higher levels of teacher/child and parent/child success. They use the same 15 interactions and therefore help link home and school. Some examples of the interactions are: spending time together, listening, affirming, courtesy, and encouragement (Los Angeles County Office Of Education, 2001).

"Students in a majority of today's schools represent a myriad of languages, ethnicities, cultures and values. The TESA program offers teachers effective strategies proven to help students achieve academic and personal success" (Los Angeles County Office of Education, 2001, p. 1). Many teacher programs involve learning how to fix someone else. TESA is a program that suggests that the best way to create change is to change ourselves. The TESA program was inspired by the early studies of teacher expectations conducted by Thomas Good and Jere Brophy (Los Angeles County Office of Education, 2001).

Most parents already have many good parent skills. PESA, like other successful programs, helps parents build on the skills they already have. It is based on the research of Joyce Epstein, Ann Henderson and Nancy Berla, Reginald Clark, and many others. The belief behind PESA is that all children are highly valued members of society. Using the same 15 suggested interactions as the TESA program uses, parents can develop them to meet their own personal and cultural preferences (Los Angeles County Office of Education, 2001).

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES

#### Background of the project

The author became interested in this project early in her teaching career when she realized that parents often did not know much about what was occurring in their child's classroom. There appeared to be a lack of communication between teacher and parent. While this author took steps to remedy the situation in the form of an initial "back to school" packet which briefly explained classroom expectations and rules, as well as a weekly progress report, it became apparent that more interventions were needed. The author then decided to take further steps to increase parental involvement in her classroom.

The lack of an appropriate vehicle for parent information was considered. After significant research, it was determined that there was a lack of information providing studies of the effects of a parent handbook on parental involvement in the primary school setting. Though much research was available on the benefits of parental involvement, as well as, methods to get parents involved, there was considerable lack of information on parent

handbooks that have been proven to be effective in informing parents and getting them more involved in their child's education. More research needs to be forthcoming.

#### Project Procedure

Parent involvement has been proven to increase student learning in the elementary school setting (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). It is apparent that the more knowledgeable parents are, the more they can do to assist their child. A parent handbook then, is another tool to provide written information to parents to aid them in becoming involved in the education of their children. Education becomes more of a family affair and consequently children benefit from the added interest and involvement of their parents.

In addition, it is clear that the parent handbook alone is not enough to maximize parental involvement. Without an explanation of and introduction to the handbook, parents are not likely to become involved. It becomes just another packet of information that will be glanced at and then set aside. There must be an introductory parent meeting to explain the handbook. At this meeting, the teacher will thoroughly explain the handbook's contents and

then provide a question and answer period. An open door policy, workshops, meetings and intentional parent-teacher communication will then be indicated which will promote parent-teacher communication.

### Project Development

In order to fully develop this project, three steps must be undertaken. The three steps include the creation of a comprehensive English/Spanish translated handbook, an introductory meeting that explains the handbook and follow-up opportunities for parents to become involved and stay involved in their child's education through workshops and communication.

The first step is the creation of a comprehensive handbook which will serve as a reliable source of information for the entire school year. This is a compilation of a variety of information including first grade expectations, guidelines, tips, topics and subjects taught, discipline plans, management procedures, weekly progress reports, homework practices, and techniques for parents. In addition, it contains parenting tips and information about stages of growth and development of seven and eight year olds. It provides information about

community resources for families in need of assistance. It also provides a monthly overview of the curriculum.

The second step is the opportunity for parents and teacher to get together in an open house/curriculum night format. At this meeting, the handbook is used as a tool to explain the school year and the expectations for student learning. It is also an opportunity to provide information about parental involvement possibilities and expectations.

The third step is to provide opportunities for parent involvement. There must be available avenues for parents to get involved and to stay involved in their child's education. Workshops giving specific instruction for helping their child, sign up sheets for volunteering, parent-teacher conference expectations, weekly progress reports, suggestions for helping their children at home, and frequent telephone contact are ways that are provided as easy avenues of communication between parent and teacher.

#### Project Implementation

The project focuses on involving parents to a greater degree in the classroom by providing an informative parent

handbook which is introduced and thoroughly explained at a parent/teacher meeting. Further opportunities for parental involvement are then provided throughout the school year in the form of workshops, volunteering, parent-teacher conference expectations, weekly progress reports, suggestions for helping their children at home, and frequent telephone contact with teacher.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROJECT

#### Introduction

One part of the parent involvement plan is a handbook that provides information of second grade expectations, guidelines, tips, subjects, the Make Your Day citizenship program, weekly progress reports, homework practices, and techniques for parents. In addition, it contains parenting tips and information about stages of growth and development of seven and eight year olds. It provides information about community resources for families in need of assistance. It also provides a monthly overview of the curriculum. This information is provided to be helpful to parents and is meant to supplement the rest of the parent involvement plan of workshops, meetings, and parent communication.

#### Organization of Handbook

The handbook is organized by chapters which include an introduction, general classroom information, philosophy of education, expectations for behavior, homework, and materials and supplies. It also briefly discusses the curriculum in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, art, physical education, music, computer skills, social skills, health, and safety. These

sections of curriculum are divided into monthly topics.

Other topics in the handbook are community resource numbers, Make Your Day Citizenship Program, Developmental Stages of Second Grade children, Open House topic and time, progress report format, workshop times, schedule for physical education, art, music, and library specialists, and communication forms for parent contact.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

#### Summary

This project was created to provide opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's education. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. Through the use of a parent handbook, follow-up meetings and workshops, and pro-active parent/teacher communication, it is hoped that parent involvement will be increased.

#### Conclusions

This project provides a useful tool for parents to help them understand more about what is happening in their child's school and classroom. Its use can give helpful information to parents. There are many benefits to parents and children when there is increased parent involvement including: increases in student graduation rates, improved student self-esteem, behavior and motivation, a more positive attitude toward school among parents and students; and increased parent satisfaction with teachers. Challenges

to the project were low income families, unfamiliarity with English language, special education students, and working parents. In addition, parents may simply choose not to participate. Parents who work all day were another area to be considered when thinking about parent involvement. Parent meetings, conferences, and calls need to be scheduled in advance so that time off from work can be arranged. If these guidelines are put in place, there will be increased chances of parent involvement.

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that this project be utilized in the author's second grade classroom as a tool to help increase parent involvement. It appears that some schools and teachers are successful while others are not. The schools that had success were schools that were well-organized and had gone out of their way to accommodate parents. With the parent handbook, workshops, follow-up meetings, and conscientious effort by the teacher to reach out to parents there should be a greater level of parent involvement. When these variables are all combined, there should be an effective parent-teacher communication program and therefore an increased opportunity for parent involvement.

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Parent Handbook

Second Grade

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Mission View Elementary

Mrs. Hart

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## Introduction

Welcome to the world of second grade at Mission View Elementary School! It is my hope that this school year will be a fun-filled learning adventure for both you and your child. We will be working closely with each other to ensure your child's success in second grade.

To give you a general overview of what second grade consists of, I have listed several areas that we will be actively involved in all year long.

- \* Whole group instruction
- \* Individual instruction and practice
- \* Silent, choral, and partner reading
- \* Library
- \* Physical Education (P.E.)
- \* Music
- \* Art
- \* Writing
- \* Science and Health
- \* Social Studies
- \* Recess
- \* Thematic and seasonal learning centers
- \* Reading centers

- \* Math Discovery Workplaces
  - \* Computer Skills
  - \* Learning how to get along with others
-

## General Information

Our classroom has an open door policy. That means that you are invited and encouraged to come, visit, observe, or spend time with your child at any time without prior arrangement. I would like for us to get to know each other better. By knowing a little about each other, we will be able to work together to help your child learn better because we can relate the experiences at home to the learning at school. I hope that we can work together all year long to provide the best possible education for your child.

If you would like to have a more formal conference, we will need to set up an appointment so that it does not interfere with the teaching schedule. Thank you for your understanding.

This handbook is for the families in our second grade classroom community only. Please feel free to contact me at school at 509-663-5851. I will be happy to talk with you any time.

## My Philosophy of Education

My philosophy of education is that each and every child will be treated with dignity, respect, and love. Our classroom will be based on respect for each other. We will have open discussions and feel free to agree or respectfully disagree with one another.

We will study important real world issues and work together to confront these problems. Empowered by this knowledge, my students will be able to make informed decisions and good choices in life.

I will make sure that each child brings a bit of his or her own culture into the classroom. I will give my heart to each and every child and will maintain a high degree of personal integrity, honesty, faithfulness, and openness.

I will work with my colleagues for the common good of the students and will be a life-long learner gaining new insight into best practices. By knowing my students well, I will make a difference in their lives.

## Curriculum

The curriculum that we study in second grade is an exciting and fun-filled one! We do many projects and study many different things.

We can divide the curriculum into different subject areas to see what your child will be learning in each one. Although the subjects can be broken down into different areas, they are usually taught together in units. I will be asking for your ideas about ways to make what we study at school connect to your life at home. This will make what your child learns more meaningful. It will be important for us to talk together about the curriculum. By discussing what your child needs to learn, we can work together to come up with ways to help your child with certain skills.

## Mathematics

Mathematic instruction is taught according to two district curriculum programs: *Bridges (Core Math Program)* and *Number Corner* by Math Learning Center. The Wenatchee School District has created its own math assessments.

Suggestions for helping your child include playing games like card games, traditional family games that involve numbers, Monopoly, Connect Four, Battleship, Uno, Yahtzee, and other games that require the use of numbers.

Daily practice of addition and subtraction facts through an answer of 18 ( $9+9$ ) is very important. Helping with and completing math homework is beneficial (Wenatchee Public Schools, 2008). Here is what our year looks like.

**September** - Sorting, Patterning & Number Sense

**October** - Sorting, Patterning & Number Sense, Hungry

Ants: Story Problems

**November** - Addition, Subtraction & Probability

**December** - Addition, Subtraction & Probability,

Exploring Shapes, Symmetry, Area & Number Sense

**January** - Games, Graphs & Toys: Probability &

Statistics, Computation

**February** - Games, Graphs & Toys: Probability &

Statistics, Computation, Branching into Larger Numbers:

Money & Place Value

**March** - Larger Numbers: Money & Place Value

**April** - Get Those Marbles Rolling: Measuring &

Statistics

**May** - Games, Graphs & Toys: Probability & Statistics,

Computation

**June** - Games, Graphs & Toys: Probability & Statistics,

Computation

### Reading

The adopted reading program is *Sails*, by Rigby. Another part of it is Write Source Materials: *Write Away*, by Great Source Education Group; and several teacher selected sources which supplement the basic adoption. Our classroom also uses the *Open Court* program by SRA. Students need to be able to understand what they read. They will be learning strategies such as: asking questions, clarifying confusing parts, making inferences, predicting, summarizing, and retelling text (Wenatchee School District, 2008).

Part of the reading program consists of teaching students to use what they know about words and the way sentences sound to predict and confirm what they read so that they can understand the text. It also promotes locating and using information from many different types of books to answer questions.

In second grade, students begin to think in ways that will help them understand what they are reading. They will read and understand the difference between fiction and nonfiction text. They will need to be able to respond to text in varied ways (Wenatchee School District, 2008).

Each student will be reading different materials for different purposes. Your child needs to understand and use skills and strategies to read and understand the meaning of what is read. They should be able to retell the story and begin to understand the main idea (Wenatchee Public Schools, 2008).

Your child's reading level is officially assessed by the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). The standard DRA for the beginning of the year is level 18 and the standard at the end of the year is level 28. Parents, student, and teacher will work together to set reading goals. We will evaluate progress toward these reading goals throughout the year.

Suggestions for helping your child are to read with them every day. Talk about the story emphasizing character, setting, and problem/solution of the story. Encourage your child to read smoothly and with expression. Talk to your child to help develop their vocabulary (Wenatchee Public Schools, 2008). It may be fun to write interesting stories together and read them at family reading time. Students usually enjoy hearing family stories passed down from grandparents and parents. This might be a great source of stories to write about.

### Writing

Writing becomes more detailed in second grade. The stories are more involved and generally they follow a sequence (beginning, middle, and end). Students begin to understand the writing process. They will use a variety of forms such as letters, stories, rhymes, and instructions. They will need to write clearly and effectively and then to evaluate their work. We will be setting goals together to help improve the writing. A wonderful way to help with both reading and writing is by writing a story about something that is interesting to you and your child. Working together on a story and then adding pictures to it to make a book that can be shared is valuable.

Spelling will be integrated into the writing process as well as being taught as a separate subject. Students will be expected to spell grade level words correctly making use of the spelling rules and patterns. *Spelling Connections* is the new district adopted program (Wenatchee Public Schools, 2008).

Suggestions for helping your child are encouraging her to write notes, letters, lists, cards, and other messages. If you have access to a computer, your child may be even more interested in writing. Talking about what they are

writing at school and joining the class for the monthly author celebration is another great way to keep their interest in writing high. This might be a good time to share the stories written at home as well!

### *Science*

We will be studying exciting topics in our science units. We will be studying: *Life Cycle of Butterflies*, *Pebbles, Sand & Silt*, and *Balance & Motion*. In addition, we will study the social studies and science unit of *Awesome Apple Adventures*. This will include a field trip. Parents are invited to come on this field trip. We need you!

For the Force and Motion unit, suggestions for helping your child at home are helping them predict and describe how different forces cause things to move. Try playing with yo-yos, spinning toys, marbles, balls, and maybe even go bowling. For the Life Cycle of the Butterfly unit, describe the life cycles of animals (example: egg-caterpillar-cocoon-butterfly), check out library books about life cycles, and observe living things in detail. For the Pebbles, Sand, Silt, and Fossils unit, you can have your child sort rocks based on texture, size, color, and shape. Collecting rocks is a great activity. Explain what fossils are to your child and how they are similar to living

things. Another suggestion is to visit the Wenatchee and Cashmere museums (Wenatchee Public Schools, 2008).

### *Social Studies*

The second grade social studies theme is communities.

The text is *Adventures in Time and Place*, by Marsh McGraw Hill & National Geographic. Parents are invited to come and share what they know about our community. Children will learn about communities and how they are formed and change. They also need to understand that there are many different types of communities and that they may have many different crops. Students will become aware of the importance of apples in our community. Students also need to know about natural resources.

Suggestions for helping your child are to visit museums and government offices. It is important to get your child involved in recycling and caring about the community. Also, discuss with your child community celebrations and the meaning of them (Wenatchee Public Schools, 2008).

### *Health*

In second grade, counselors teach the Grade Two: *Talking About Touching* unit. Healthy eating, personal health habits, safe touching, and sources of help are also presented.

Suggestions for helping your child understand this information are to discuss bicycle safety, emergency drills and procedures for fire and unexpected problems. Helpful hints are to include your child in planning the family meal, model positive communication strategies, and discuss and show respect for cultural diversity (Wenatchee Public Schools, 2008).

## Community and School Resources

Boys Scouts of America..... 509-662-5501  
Camp Fire U.S.A..... 509-663-1609  
4-H ..... 509-664-5540  
Girl Scouts of America..... 509-967-8113  
Children's Discovery Museum..... 509-665-0941  
Wenatchee Youth Baseball..... 509-663-2222  
Wenatchee Youth Basketball..... 509-662-2109  
Alcohol/Drug Problems..... 509-662-9673  
Child Abuse and Neglect/Protective Services.... 509-667-6135  
Crisis Line..... 509-662-7105 or  
1-800-852-2923  
Poison Control..... 1-800-222-1222  
YMCA..... 509-662-2109  
Wenatchee Public Library..... 509-662-5021  
Catholic Family & Children's Services..... 509-662-6761  
Children's Home Society..... 509-663-0034  
DSHS..... 509-662-0511 or  
1-800-272-8881  
WIC (Women, Infants & Children)..... 509-664-3771  
Women's Resource Center ..... 509-662-0121  
Food Bank..... 509-662-7830  
Big Brothers/Big Sisters..... 509-663-0034  
LINK transportation..... 509-662-1155  
Domestic Sexual Violence & Crisis Center..... 509-663-7446

Head Start Preschool .....	509-663-5179
Early Childhood Education Assistance Program...	509-667-8113
Migrant Home Visitors.....	509-662-9634
Homeless Liaison.....	509-662-9634
EPIC (educational and social service support) ..	509-884-2435
Children's Home Society Readiness to Learn.....	509-663-0034
Mission View Principal.....	509-663-5851
Mission View Family Advocate.....	509-663-5851
Mission View Counselor.....	509-663-5851

## Make Your Day Citizenship Program/Character Education

We strive to be "quality people" by being polite, safe, and responsible. Students are taught that no one has the right to interfere with the rights of others to learn or to be safe. Students are encouraged to do what is expected and to do it the best they can. This is in line with the Wenatchee School District's Citizenship Program called Make Your Day.

It is very important to involve parents in their child's behavior. It isn't always easy to contact you by phone, so I often rely on Make Your Day slips to keep you informed of the "annoying and taking time away from the class" problems. Be assured that any serious issues will be communicated immediately by phone as per Make Your Day procedure.

This method is used to grade citizenship at report card time. Please remind your child that I don't expect them to be perfect and that we all make mistakes at times. This process will help them become aware of their actions and to take responsibility for their own behavior.

In addition, we will be studying Character Education. This is a series of important topics that will assist children in developing lifelong skills to help them make

positive choices and live healthy lives. Honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, courage, compassion, bravery, and respect are just a few of the topics we will be discussing. We have character trait assemblies every two months. These assemblies honor students who have excelled at a particular character trait. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend the assembly. Notices will be sent home to let parents know when their child will be receiving an award.

"MAKE YOUR DAY is based on a philosophy that promotes development of an internal locus of control in students. The basic tenets of this philosophy are built on human dignity and responsibility. Students understand that their actions result in fair, logical, and predictable consequences that are enforced in a manner that preserves their dignity. When one internalizes the philosophy inherent in Make Your Day; the structure and how to utilize it become obvious. There is no need for a "cookbook" that covers all possible actions and reactions within the school environment. Free will and choice are important components of Make Your Day that enhance the students' ability to develop an internal locus of control. . .

Allowing students to make choices provides them with opportunities to learn through their successes and failures. Make Your Day affords students the opportunity to assess their academic and behavioral performance frequently so that there is time for error and recovery. The Make Your Day philosophy supports each student's right to succeed or fail. Students who choose to take part in the learning environment put forth a distinctly higher level of effort. Those students who choose to "opt out" are given the opportunity to do it in a way that does not affect the learning of others. According to Webster's Dictionary, a consequence is defined as the "...result of an action." (p. 127) This differs from Webster's definition of punishment, which is a "...penalty or harsh treatment." (p. 462) Students perceive and understand the difference between consequences and punishment. Although "fairness" is an ambiguous personal experience, there is a consensus among students that a consistent environment, a high regard for privacy, and an understanding of individual needs

result in a feeling of being treated fairly. Make Your Day allows students to make decisions that result in fair, reasonable, predictable, and (for the teacher) enforceable consequences, which immediately follow a behavior that interferes with the learning or safety of others. MAKE YOUR DAY is no more than the understanding that EVERY STUDENT HAS THE RIGHT TO LEARN IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT" (Brown, 2007, p. 1).

## Child Development

### *Differences in Children*

As we think about students at Mission View School, it is important to keep in mind that they are all unique. And because they are all unique, we should expect learning to happen at different rates. The many factors that can affect student learning include their mental or social maturity, use of or exposure to language, experiential background, intellectual capability, and parental support. As you can see, there isn't just one factor involved in learning new information. My hope is that we will see all students make growth in their academic and social life this year.

### *Stages of Development in*

#### *Second Grade Children*

Middle childhood is considered to be between the ages of 6 to 8 years of age. Your child can do many new things at this time. They can dress themselves, tie their shoes, and catch a ball more easily. They are beginning to become more independent from their family. Starting school brings them into contact with the larger world and friendships become more important. They are developing physically, socially,

and mentally at a rapid rate. This is an important time for children to develop confidence through friends, schoolwork, and sports (USA Department of Health and Human Services). Your child has changed a bit. They must now meet the demands of school life.

*Some characteristics of Seven year olds*

"Seven has many wonderful character traits. He is polite, sympathetic, affectionate, and cooperative. He is proud of his family and loves to hear stories about when mom and dad were children. He has more empathy for others and is less selfish. Seven has developed more self-control and emotional stability. At seven, the child becomes more introverted and thoughtful. This is a developmental progression that leads to the perception of the psychological self around age eight. This year, he is simply thinking about things, worrying and planning and sorting out all of the experiences that he has encountered since kindergarten. He is fearful about his ability to succeed at new things at school and about his acceptance by other kids. Seven can handle losing better than last year; and lying, cheating, and stealing diminish considerably. Parents

should definitely confront these behaviors now to ensure the child understands that they are wrong. Consequences for lying, cheating, and stealing might range from social disapproval with a lecture, removal of privileges, and restitution. Be consistent to extinguish these negative character traits" (Craig, 2008, p. 1).

*Some characteristics of Eight year olds"*

"The 8-year-old is growing slowly and steadily. You might say they are "half-way up the stairs." Eager, very active and friendly, an 8-year-old is quite mature in many ways; they know right from wrong. They are able to accept moderate responsibilities. They like to be a member of a group. They want a best friend. They want to do well. Around age 8, your child will enjoy helping with household chores. Having some simple jobs for your child to do is important. It helps to organize his or her time. It also lets the youngster feel a part of the family and gives him or her sense of importance and accomplishment. Just remember to fit the job to the child's age. Examples of jobs for this age might

be: empty the dishwasher, set the table and clean up after dinner, fold clothes and put them away, and dust furniture. The 8-year-old is looking outside the family for new ideas and activities. Peer groups become important and the child will identify with other youngsters of the same sex and with similar interests and activities. The child will often have a "best" friend - an important milestone in development. The growing influence of peers often presents a challenge to parents. As a parent, you must realize that your 8-year-old is beginning to value his or her peers' opinions as well as yours. But, at this age, parent opinion and values are still the strongest. Keep lines of communication open by not talking down to them, offering reasonable explanations and continuing to give praise and encouragement" (Kidsgrowth, 2008).

## Open House/Workshops

We will be having an open house curriculum night early in the school year. A notice will be sent home to let you know the date. At this open house night, we will be introducing the curriculum and expectations for the second grade year. More importantly, we will be getting to know each other and starting the process of working together to provide the best possible education for your child.

Later in the year, we will be having workshops where we can work together to exchange ideas for help your child at home and at school. Again, notices will be sent home to keep you informed of the dates of these workshops.

## Weekly Progress Reports

Progress reports come home almost every Friday. They are a "snapshot" of what we are learning and how your child is doing in the classroom. These progress reports will keep you informed of the progress your child is making in school. There will be a place for comments and your signature. Please return the signed portion of the report the next day. Any questions will be answered either with a phone call, written note, or conference at school. If you prefer, I also can communicate by email if you give me your email address. It is an added bonus to be able to communicate by email during the day as I usually check my email a couple of times during the day.

## Homework

Homework is an expectation in second grade. Primarily the homework will consist of nightly reading practice. There will also be math activities and spelling practice. The homework needs to be done neatly and returned the next day. Statistics show that children who read daily for at least twenty minutes and do homework daily do better in school (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). It is a good habit to establish early in your child's schooling. If at all possible, please provide a quiet place for your child to do the homework. Feel free to help your child with the homework. You know best what your child needs in the way of help.

## General Classroom Information

### *Very Important Person - VIP*

Every week a student's name will be drawn to be the Very Important Person from our room. The VIP may bring photos plus their favorite book and toy for display during the week. I cannot guarantee the safety of the fragile, expensive, or irreplaceable items. We do our best to respect the property of others, but accidents do happen, especially when curiosity takes over. Items brought to school will not be allowed outside for recess play. We might have pet visitations - depending on allergies.

### *Parent Helpers*

Please feel free to come to help at school. I wholeheartedly encourage parents to be involved in their child's education. Having your help in the classroom is truly wonderful. There will be many times when I need your assistance with party treats, chaperoning, or program preparations. I also need help with math and reading. If you have any special skills, talents, or interesting hobbies that you can share with the class, please let me know. I would love for you to come in and share with the children. Please let me know if you would be interested in helping out in any way in the classroom.

### *Birthdays*

If you would like to send treats on your child's birthday, that's great! We currently have 21 students. Birthday treats can be left in the office or classroom in the morning. We share birthday treats at about 2:10pm. Let me know ahead of time so I can plan it into our schedule. Students with a summer birthday can choose a different day to celebrate their special day.

### *Book Orders*

You may want to take advantage of our book club discount prices, which can be quite a savings on most items. The flyers come out monthly and will have a note attached to designate the due date. Remember to write your child's name on it and enclose the correct amount. If paying by check, a separate check must accompany each order, even if it is the same company. They have different accounts and mailing addresses. Do not make the checks payable to Mission View School. I will send the book orders home with your child unless you have specified them as gift items.

### *Schedule*

School starts at 8:15 a.m. on Tuesday through Thursday. On Monday, we have a late start day - school begins at 9:45 a.m. Students enter the building through the double doors in the primary wing. Although it is often impossible to be on time every day, please try your best to avoid being late. Please encourage your child to be to school on time so they are off to a good start and don't miss out on important information. If you do bring your child to school late, they should report to the office for an admit slip. We have a morning recess from 10:10 - 10:30 every day except Monday. We wash for lunch at 11:20 and eat lunch from 11:30 - 12:00. We also have an afternoon recess from 12:20 - 12:50. Our day ends at 2:45 p.m. unless indicated on the school calendar as an early release day.

### *Specialist Schedule*

P.E. - Wednesdays and Fridays with Mr. Fox. Please have your child dress in appropriate clothing on these days. It is important that your child wear the correct shoes on P.E. days. Tennis shoes or non-marking shoes only are allowed on the gym floor. If there is a reason your child should not participate in P.E., please write a note so that Mr. Fox can excuse him/her from that day's activities.

Music - Tuesdays and Thursdays with Mrs. Richmond.

Library - Fridays with Mr. Gemeinhart. Please encourage your child to take care of the library books. They are due back every Friday in the plastic bag.

Art - Every other Tuesday with Mr. Ferrell. Please wear clothes that you do not mind if your child gets dirty or send an art apron to put on top of clothing.

#### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, I hope this year proves to be a valuable one where we can work together to insure a worthwhile educational experience for your child. Communication is very important so please contact me with any information, suggestions, questions, or concerns and I will keep in touch with you as well.

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