

# research snapshot

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## Diversity Is an Important Classroom Resource

### What is this research about?

Research suggests that a child's success at school depends on a strong relationship between the school and the child's family. As diversity increases in Canadian communities, educational critics have urged educators to find new ways to forge links between schools and families. But there is still little consensus as to how to forge these links, especially when the families are newly arrived.

### What did the researcher do?

The researcher created a two-hour, after-school program. They set it up in three public schools in Peel Region, Ontario – two junior schools and one senior-middle school. The program had three goals:

- To improve the learning of non-native English-speaking immigrant students.
- To get immigrant parents to participate in their children's schooling.
- To promote a climate that privileges diversity as a resource in schools.

### What you need to know:

After-school programs, focused on immigrant students and their parents, can improve the performance of students and also get parents more involved in their children's schooling. It is important to use diversity as a resource in the classroom.

The program involved students, parents, teachers, principals, settlement workers, university researchers, and high school volunteers. In the first hour, parents worked with students on teacher-directed activities. In the second hour, parents focused on topics that they identified as important. These topics included, among other things: homework, the Ontario school system, and how to interpret report cards.

### What did the researcher find?

The researcher found that the program had a positive effect on both students and parents. The program increased the confidence of students. Students showed more self-assurance, more interest in class, and less hesitation in asking for help. They became more receptive to homework – and to one another. Students formed

networks, and some took leadership roles. Their relationships with their parents also improved. Parents got more involved in their children's schooling and forged relationships with other parents and teachers in the program.

### How can you use this research?

This research will be of interest to:

- Policy-makers focused on family resettlement and adult literacy programs.
- Educators.
- Linguistics and educational researchers.

This research will help to reduce and streamline the pressures of family resettlement.

### About the Researcher

Dr. Sandra R. Schecter is Professor, Office of the Dean, Faculty of Education, York University. This Research Snapshot is from her study, "Parent Involvement as Education: The Primary and Middle School Classroom as a Site of Inter-generational Language Learning."

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### Citation

A number of collaborative research papers and a book resulting from this study were published, including:

Cummins, J., Chow, P., & Schecter, S. R. (2006). Community as curriculum. *Language Arts*, 83(4), 297-307. Available online at <http://bit.ly/1kR6yNI>

Pease-Alvarez, L., & Schecter, S. R. (Eds.). (2005). *Learning, teaching, and community: Contributions of situated and participatory approaches to educational innovation*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Available online at <http://bit.ly/ObQcBy>

Schecter, S. R., Ippolito, J., & Rashkovsky, K. (2007). Schools in transition: Giving parents part of the PIE. *Educational Leadership*, 64(6), 69-71. Available online at <http://bit.ly/1fwype0>

### Keywords

Primary education, Secondary education, Immigration, Parenting, Language training

### Knowledge Mobilization at York

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