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# Involving Parents With Limited English Skills

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Involving parents with limited English proficiency in their children's education can present special challenges. Creative approaches may be required as schools work to become partners with parents who have different cultural backgrounds and whose English is limited. Some strategies that have helped others include the following:

- Translate letters, notices, progress reports, school handbooks, and information packets into the languages of families of all students.
- Have individuals available to answer the school telephone who speak the languages of parents.
- Translate newsletters or key newsletter articles.
- Record phone messages in other languages so non-English speaking parents can also keep track of their children's coursework and school events.
- Use school newsletters to announce cultural and other events sponsored by other language groups represented in the school.
- Integrate bilingual and multicultural materials in school displays, publications, libraries, and classrooms.
- Use paid or volunteer interpreters to promote communication with limited English parents.
- Hire bilingual parent coordinators or find volunteers to meet with parents in their homes and at parent centers, churches, and other gathering places to talk about school-related issues.
- Recruit, train, and hire bilingual parents to be paraprofessionals in the schools.

- Make special efforts to welcome limited English proficient parents who visit the schools.

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## Developing Innovative Programs

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Many schools have also developed innovative programs to help parents with limited English take part in their children's education:

**School-Based Literacy and Family Nights**—Literacy and other adult basic education programs are offered in schools with activities for children, such as homework tutoring and recreational activities, available at the same time.

**Enrichment Programs**—Schools work with adult education agencies to conduct enrichment programs designed for parents with limited English proficiency. These programs include workshops for skill development, field trips that provide educational experiences, and other special events.

**English as a Second Language Adult Education Programs**—These programs coordinate the education of parents with the education of their children. Materials used for English as a Second Language and literacy training are also used by children in their classrooms.

**Utilizing All the Community's Resources**—Ethnic communities often sponsor activities and events that enrich children's appreciation of their parents' cultural heritages. In connection with these events, teachers can integrate specific cultural knowledge into the curriculum by inviting parents to make presentations and undertake projects with students. Activities could include cooking classes, celebrations of holidays, craft fairs, and international dinners.

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