

## **Strengthening Home-School Connections within the Indo-Canadian Community**

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Electronic copies of a short article on the study and of the complete graduate paper are available from either of the authors.

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## Abstract

As cultural diversification increases within the Canadian population, Canada's schools need to adapt and evolve in order to reflect the increasingly diverse needs of learners. This paper focuses on the Indo-Canadian community and investigates if preschools can serve as an effective means to strengthen the relationship between family and school. In some cultures, such as the Indo-Canadian culture, for many parents it is not traditional to take an active role within the school system.

There is substantial literature that supports the need for strengthening the connection between home and school. Fostering a strong relationship has a positive effect on student success. The literature also shows that barriers can impede success in creating a home-school connection ultimately resulting in poorer student performance. Some of the greatest barriers to student success are language and cultural differences. Previous studies have examined this broad issue of the home-school connection; however there is no research that has explored these issues specifically within the Indo-Canadian community.

The authors examined a preschool program in the Abbotsford School District to see if it had an effect on the home-school connection, student behavior and academic success in Kindergarten. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. Ten parents were interviewed and were asked to complete a Likert style survey. Of those parents, six had children enrolled in preschool, whereas four did not. Four Kindergarten teachers and two preschool staff shared their perspectives of the effects of preschool on the home-school connection, and successful integration of children into Kindergarten. Upon entry in Kindergarten, all students take an entry test for English language proficiency. Tests results were analyzed to determine if a preschool experience had an effect on academic performance upon entry into Kindergarten.

Results from our interviews with the parents and the students in our study showed that the preschool experience was a benefit both academically and behaviourally for Indo-Canadian students entering kindergarten. Interview data suggested that parent involvement in school varies. However, there was strong affirmation for academics and respect for the school community. In addition, according to the study, the preschool experience brought English literacy activities into the home.

The authors made recommendations that could assist schools, in creating stronger home-school connections within culturally diverse communities. Suggestions to strengthen the home-school connection include: maintain the preschool and drop in center on the Harry Sayers site, expand programming to include ESL instruction for parents, house a Multi-cultural worker in the elementary school to assist in early intervention and build a connection between the home and school. Recommendations for further research were made in order to explore this complex topic.

