

**The Home/School Connection:  
*Collaborating to Promote Best Practice in World Language Education*  
Issue 2, October 2006**

A child learning a language is learning about the world, about how it is organized and how it works. This is very different, if only in degree, from the adult learning a second language, who tends to work the other way around: he brings his world with him and uses the language to try to express it.

Edith Harding and Philip Riley,  
*The Bilingual Family: A Handbook for Parents* \*

Dear Parents,

Multilingualism may well be our country's strongest asset in leading the way into the globally interconnected world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The richness of the USA's social and cultural melting pot is what makes the United States unique compared to many countries. For this reason, it makes sense to develop our children's language capability from an early age through high-quality programs.

**Total Immersion and Partial Immersion/Dual Language  
Schools Build Dual Literacy Skills**

*Total immersion and partial immersion/dual language* (also called *two-way immersion*) programs or schools are instructional models that have a proven track record in fostering high achievement levels in English **and** in another language. By developing dual literacy through the teaching of academic content and skills, these "additive" program models contribute to building children's ethnic self-esteem and cross-cultural understanding. Children enrolled in total immersion or partial immersion/dual language programs or schools often surpass their monolingual peers in tests of basic skills in English language arts and math while developing second language proficiency.

Although still uncommon, these types of programs are growing in numbers in some areas of the country. The [Fairfax County Public](#)

[Schools in Virginia](#), the thirteenth largest school system in the nation, is well known for its dual language/partial immersion offerings in a variety of languages.

In Maryland, the [Montgomery County Public Schools](#) system is also well-known for its excellent total and partial immersion programs.

Visit the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) to learn more about [language immersion programs](#) and [two-way immersion programs](#).

### **Parental involvement can make multilingualism a success story for our children**

“Parents Take Language Class into Their Own Hands” was the title of a recent article published in the New York Times. Parental involvement in language learning is a growing trend, not only for bilingual families, but even for families who do not speak a second language. The involvement level goes from expanding language learning opportunities beyond the classroom (e.g. by enrolling children in extra-curricular classes, purchasing materials for home use, etc.) all the way to taking language classes together as a family.

Here are some interesting online articles to read on this topic:

- [“Parent and School Support Make an Outstanding FLES Program Possible in Fairfax County, VA”](#)
- [“Communicating with parents and involving them in their child’s foreign language learning”](#)
- [“Building Ties to Birth Countries”](#) (focused on adoptive families)
- [“Workshops Held for Latino Parents”](#) (in a school district in Connecticut)

Parental support organizations are also emerging all over the world:

- [Multilingual Children’s Association](#) (USA)
- [The World Language Network](#) (USA)

- [The Multilingual Network](#) (Dubai)
- [Multilingual Family](#) (U.K.)

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NNELL can assist teachers, parents and administrators interested in early language learning. Contact your State Representative today or visit [www.nnell.org](http://www.nnell.org).

The "Home-School Connection" monthly flier with tips and resources can be found at [www.nnell.org](http://www.nnell.org). Teachers may reproduce it and send it home in their students' backpacks. Send suggestions/comments to Ana Lomba, Political Action and Advocacy Chair: [ana@analomba.com](mailto:ana@analomba.com).

\* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 8.