

**The Home/School Connection:
Collaborating to Promote Best Practice in World Language Education
Issue 1, September 2006**

Leadership in the twenty-first century will depend not only on strengthening our students' reading, math, and science skills, but also on helping them become citizens of the world by expanding their knowledge of other countries, cultures, and languages. Our national security and our economic prosperity ultimately depend on how well we educate today's students to become tomorrow's global leaders.

—Committee for Economic Development (CED), 2006.*

Dear Parents,

In an increasingly diverse community both within and beyond our borders, our children's innate capacity and natural ability to acquire languages needs to be cultivated if an important education goal is to prepare them to successfully live and work in the global community of the 21st century. As such, the National Network for Early Language Learning (NELL) seeks to provide parents with information related to learning other languages both at home and in the classroom through the *Home/School Connection*.

In this introductory letter, we would like to focus on parental involvement. This is especially important when it comes to supporting a child's learning of another language. Since using language is a social skill, learning may be greatly enhanced by practicing a new language in settings beyond the classroom. For example:

- When parents learn a new language with their children it sends a positive message that learning a language is worth doing, as well as providing additional time for enjoyable interactions at home.
- Extra-curricular language learning programs, such as summer language camps and community school immersion weekends/weeks, also provide an opportunity to participate in a variety of enjoyable language activities in a relaxed environment.

- Some families already speak a second language at home. What a treasure! Your collaboration is needed to help maintain and expand your children's home language skills.

As you may be aware, many schools in the U.S. do not offer language instruction in preschool and elementary school or may only offer programs with minimal time allocations. Parents can become effective advocates for new or improved programs using resources on the NNELL website. NNELL can assist teachers, parents and administrators with advocacy efforts. Contact your State Representative today. We'd love to hear from you!

*An educated American in the twenty-first century should be proficient in at least one foreign language, have studied at least one global issue or region in depth, and be knowledgeable of the geography and history of our country as well as other world regions.**

The "Home-School Connection" monthly flier with tips and resources can be found at 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.

* *Education for Global Leadership: The Importance of International Studies and Foreign Language Education for U.S. Economic and National Security* (Washington D.C.: Committee for Economic Development, 2006).

http://www.ced.org/projects/educ_forlang.shtml