

Professional Development Day (2/15/13)

Home Visit Reflection

T. Kao

Neon green and pink slippers emerge haphazardly from immigrant dreams to welcome me. The colorful shoes huddled together near the entrance transport me back to my childhood. The narrow hallways and towering stairs stir bitter-sweet memories of my parents and grandparents laboring each day to feed our family. In their coarse hands, my parents and grandparents held tightly onto their valuables – a tattered green card, a sack of rice, or crying child. Similarly, my students and their families struggle with heavy burdens and many uncertainties. However, their courage and hope outshines any darkness of insecurity.

I greet my students and their families politely, but their nervous smiles and hushed eyes show worry. I assure them that these home visits are a part of our school's mission to build community. We were not there to judge or to diagnose. Our students' parents, who often work ten hours a day, understand better than anyone how important it is for their children to have an education.

"My husband and I work seven days a week and we cannot help our daughter. We want to thank you for helping our child. We are willing to do anything to help her. She comes home every day and studies, but we cannot help her with her homework."

"My children are busy working so I help to take care of the grandchildren. I go to all the report conferences, but I do not speak English. My hope for my grandchild.... is that she learns English and continues to go to school."

"We thank you for coming and for helping our son. For five years, we have tried to get him into your school."

"It has been a busy week. I was out of town a lot last week for business. How is she doing in the after-school homework help?"

Parents affirm during my home visits how committed and determined they are to giving their children a quality education. They put their faith in our school and teachers to support their children because they do not understand the educational institutions of this country. These home visits helped remind how important it is to communicate with our parents to build a stronger partnership with them. The education of our students occurs both at home and school. I believe it is important to show our parents that we value the knowledge and skills they have. They have and already do contribute tremendously to their children's learning as well as to our school community.

I am humbled and grateful for the trust that our students and their parents give to us. My only fear is that I am not doing enough as a teacher and community member to prepare our students for the future.