

Vietnamese Friendship Association

FAMILY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

PARENT ADVOCACY PROGRAM
2007/2008

PROGRAM REPORT



Prepared by:

Phung Nguyen, BA

August 2008

7101 MLK Jr. Way South, Suite 212. Seattle, WA 98118. (206) 760-1573

Summary: The Vietnamese Friendship Association, with funding from United Way of King County Impact funds, the United Way of King County Venture Funds, the Gates Foundation, and the Department of Neighborhoods, launched the pilot Parent Advocacy program, one of the three components of our overarching Family Empowerment Program (FEP) in November 2007. The Parent Advocacy component comprises workshops to empower parents to become more aware and involved in their children's education. The program also includes home visits and advocacy on behalf of parents, outside of workshops. We served a total of 46 parents, most of whom are low-income and living in the 98118 or 98108 area. Parents found the program extremely helpful, not just for gathering information, but also to connect to other parents. The challenges were numerous, including coordinating with parents' schedules and transportation, as well as our underestimation of how much staff time would be required for both coordinating workshops and conducting home visits. With lessons learned this year, we look forward to continuing to develop a stronger and more effective parent advocacy program.

I. Workshops

Each month from March to June 2008, two workshops were held. Based on parents' and guest speakers' availability, the monthly two-hour workshops were conducted on Friday evenings or Saturday mornings at various locations in Southeast Seattle. Presentations were led by at least one professional guest speaker, usually bilingual, of a chosen topic. Topics were selected based on parents' needs and concerns. Ice-breakers, group activities, and discussions were incorporated in meetings to increase motivation, teamwork, and active learning.



Six workshops were held, on the following topics:

1. The difference between Vietnamese and U.S. education system and culture, and what parents need to understand to navigate the new system.
2. Understanding the WASL
3. Learning to use The Source, which is Seattle Public Schools' online database of students' grades that parents may access at any time
4. What parents need to know about getting students into college, including the college application process and financial aid.
5. Positive Discipline and reducing at-risk behaviors in children
6. Positive Discipline and reducing at-risk behaviors in adolescents



II. Home visits

To foster better relationships and communications with parents and students, 36 parents benefited from at least one-hour home visits. Home visits are scheduled via phone calling based on parents' schedules. During one-on-one conversations, parents opened up and shared their concerns or issues that may affect their families. Family's conditions were assessed to identify

whether they need additional support from our programs such as the mentoring or after-school tutoring. Community resources were given and referrals were made to families during this time. Families who have transportation and health issues, and those who could not attend workshops benefited from home visits. Multiple home visits are conducted to families who needed further assistance. The discussion and follow-up actions are recorded for documentation and evaluation purposes.

III. Community Events



Three community events were organized for parents, some in collaboration between VFA, Catholic Community Services, Cultivating Youth, Atlantic Street Center, and Seattle Housing Authority. Parents interacted with non-Vietnamese parents and community leaders in order to develop relationships and build a sense of community. Parents took part in event planning; they also prepared Vietnamese food for the events. Parents found the community events beneficial and enjoyed being able to give back to the program by helping out.

IV. Demographic of Parents Served

Parents in our program were recruited during workshops, home visits, and from our after-school and Saturday programs. Our outreach included collaborations between the VFA, Seattle Public Schools, Atlantic Street Center, Neighborhood House, and Seattle Housing Authority. Other outreach comprised community newspaper advertisements and flier distribution to local grocery stores, churches, temples, and SHA's New Holly community. Since November of 2007, our program served a total of 46 parents (45 Vietnamese parents and 1 Caucasian parent of a Vietnamese child).

Of these 46 parents:

- **Economic Status:** very low-income: 19 (41%); low-income: 4 (9%); moderate: 1 (2%); unknown: 22 (48%), as identified on intake form. Some parents were not comfortable disclosing income status, and we respected their discretion, although other data suggested that these parents were low or moderate income as well.
- **Limited English:** 45 (98%)
- **Single Parent:** 15 (33%)
- **Gender:** 37 (80%) females; 9 (20%) males

- **Age:** Ranged from 22 to 67 (average age: 40.5); 6 unknown
- **Household Size:** Ranged from 2 to 7 (average size: 4); 1 unknown
- **Geographic Region:** 98118 (27 parents; 59%), 98108 (9 parents; 20%), 98104 (2 parents; 4%), 98144 (1 parent; 2%), 98178 (1 parent; 2%), 98106 (1 parent; 2%), and 5 (11%) parents have not identified their zip code.

V. Collaborations

In the pilot year of our Parent Advocacy program, VFA is grateful for the support of our partners:

- United Way of King County, City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, and the Gates Foundation provided funding
- Atlantic Street Center – provided workshop space and community resources
- Catholic Community Services (Youth Tutoring Program) – helped coordinate community event
- Chinese Information and Service Center – Family Strengthening Curriculum referral
- Cultivating Youth – helped with community event planning
- Horn of Africa Services – provided facilities usage and workshop space
- Neighborhood House – helped with families outreach
- Seattle Housing Authority – provided community resources and helped with events planning
- Seattle-King County Public Health – provided guest speaker for workshop
- South Seattle Community College – community resources
- Refugee Women’s Alliance – community resources
- Seattle Public Schools:
 - Chief Sealth High School – families outreach
 - Cleveland High School – families outreach
 - Meany Middle School – families outreach
 - Mercer Middle School – families outreach
 - Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center – families outreach
 - Van Asselt Elementary School – families outreach
 - Office of Family & Community Partnerships – provided materials and resources
 - Bilingual Department – provided guest speaker, translated materials, and resources

VI. Accomplishments

- 41 parents attended workshops, which had attendance that ranged from 8 to 19 parents.
- 36 families benefited from home visits.
- Parents developed closer bonds with the community through volunteering and attendance at three New Holly community events that VFA helped coordinate.
- Developed better relationships and communications between parents, students, and the schools through workshops and home visits.
- Developed or strengthened partnerships with over 15 partner agencies/schools.
- Gathered a wealth of experience and connections that will enhance this year’s project.

VII. Program Evaluation

Evaluation of the program was made through a combination of surveys and through conversations with parents. Surveys were distributed at the end of every workshop, and a final evaluation survey was administered at the last workshop. Many parents, however, are unfamiliar with surveys and had trouble filling them out or refused to do it completely. Of the 46 parents enrolled, we collected final evaluation surveys from 22. The full evaluation summary chart is below. Here are some highlights:

- 95% of respondents found participation in the program helpful or very helpful.
- 95% either strongly agreed or agreed that the program helped them increase their time they spend helping students with homework
- 92% either strongly agreed or agreed that the program helped them develop better relationships with their children
- 91% either strongly agreed or agreed that the program helped them expand their social support network

Program Survey	N= 22		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This program helped me gain understanding about:							
a) American school system			71%	29%	0%	0%	0%
b) Positive discipline			46%	46%	8%	0%	0%
c) The SOURCE			62.5%	25%	6.25%	6.25%	0%
d) The WASL			40%	47%	13%	0%	0%
e) Parental Involvement			80%	10%	10%	0%	0%
f) High school graduation requirements & college preparations			60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
This program helped increase my participation in:							
a) Helping my child(ren) with homework			57%	38%	5%	0%	0%
b) School events/activities with my child(ren)			45%	50%	5%	0%	0%
c) Parent-teacher meetings			52%	35%	13%	0%	0%
I gain access to resources because of this program			36%	50%	14%	0%	0%
I expand my network/support system because of this program			55%	36%	9%	0%	0%
Because of this program, I understand the importance of being or knowing how to be involved in my child's education			83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Because of this program, I develop better relationship with my children/family			70%	22%	9%	0%	0%
Because of this program, I communicate better with my family/children			61%	39%	0%	0%	0%
Because of this program, I spend more time with my child(ren)			52%	39%	9%	0%	0%
The program is well-organized			45%	55%	0%	0%	0%
I really like the staff in this program			65%	35%	0%	0%	0%
I really like the guest speakers in this program			55%	36%	9%	0%	0%
I really like the refreshment and snacks			45%	32%	18%	0%	5%
I really enjoyed the:							
a) Ice-breakers			30%	40%	20%	0%	5%
b) Group activities			48%	43%	9%	0%	0%
c) Presentation			45%	45%	9%	0%	0%
I prefer to have Vietnamese-speaking guest speakers in this program			77%	18%	5%	0%	0%
Overall, this program is very helpful to me			65%	30%	4%	0%	0%
I would recommend this program to my friends			74%	17%	9%	0%	0%

Sample translated comments from parents:

“The program has been very beneficial to me and my children. I get to share my ideas with other parents. We learn from each other and treat each other like friends.”

“I’ve been living here for a long time and I don’t know anything about the WASL. I found the [Program] very valuable, not only to me but to other parents, students, and the community. The topics they brought up are very important.”

“From this [Positive Discipline I] workshop, I understand that in order to discipline my children effectively, I have to explain and be a role model to them.”

VIII. Challenges Overcome



- Only one main staff to do outreach, planning, and coordination for workshop, as well as home visits. This was too much for one staff to handle. Ideally, we would have one staff responsible for workshops, and one for home visits. We addressed this issue by mainly focused on conducting workshops and focusing home visits on parents who really needed the attention, as not all parents do.
- Lack of facilities for workshops (i.e. classroom, computer lab, laptop, projector, screen). Due to VFA’s lack of facilities, we had to rely on partnering with different agencies. This was beneficial to build relationships. However, we will aim for dedicated space to make it convenient for our parents, many of whom do not drive.
- Difficult to work around guest speaker’s schedule (i.e. weekdays) and parent’s schedule (i.e. evenings and weekends). Low-income parents often work multiple jobs so even if they want to come to a workshop, it is challenging for them. We had better turn-out when workshops were scheduled on the weekend versus weekdays.
- Getting parents to be engaged and empowered in the project planning. Vietnamese parents are used to passive participation instead of really owning the process. Engaging them to take active roles in the project will happen with time.
- Difficult to get Vietnamese parents to interact with parents of other ethnicities. Our vision is to empower parents enough so that they are more comfortable interacting with non-Vietnamese parents and thus build community. However, this is very challenging and will require a lot more time than was allocated.
- Difficult working with parents of high school students. Parents of high-school students are less engaged, tending to believe that their children can take care of themselves.

However, these students tend to need more assistance, since they encounter more complex challenges, such as financial aid.

- Seeking guest speakers who speak both Vietnamese and English fluently. Parents don't respond well to workshop conducted in English followed by Vietnamese interpretation. Consequently, the program coordinator learned the materials and carried out the presentation herself for certain workshops.
- Limited resources in Vietnamese language so our administrative staff helped with some of the translation.
- School partners are extremely busy, so it is challenging to set up meetings and get project activities going.

IX. Plans for 2008/2009 and Beyond

- It is too challenging for one staff to implement both home visits and workshops, considering that both require a lot of time. We will focus on coordinating high-quality workshops and will conduct home visits for a list of 10 or so parents who really need one-on-one assistance.
- Have another staff who can consistently help with program's planning and outreach,
- Parental involvement in the planning and design of workshops and events is challenging, but very important. We should allocate more time to build skills in parents so that they are more comfortable expressing their opinions and participating.
- Tailoring workshops to parents' interests increases parents' investment in the program.
- Motivating parents to participate in workshops, community and school events in general. It takes a lot more outreaching effort than anticipated to get parents to attend.
- It is good to encourage parents to volunteer for tasks such as recruiting other parents. Parents feel good when they can help out so we want them to volunteer more often.
- We should have more events that develop relationships between students and parents, such as workshops that both kids and parents can attend together.
- More time should be spent organizing events and workshops that encourage parents to interact with parents of other ethnicities in order to build community bonds.
- Develop a more parent-friendly evaluation system, since many parents are not used to surveys and more traditional means of evaluation.
- VFA should work closer with partner organizations such as the Office of Community Partnerships at the Seattle Public Schools and Campfire USA, as well as with the schools.
- Apply for other grants to support and enhance the services we have been providing to parents and families in this project.
- Leverage more funding from Seattle Public Schools' Title I and other grants.
- A long-term goal is to develop enough experience that we will be able to create a curriculum model that other agencies can replicate when working with Vietnamese parents.