Welcome to our classroom!

Bienvenido a nuestro salon de clases!

Chao mung den voi lop hoc cua chung toi!

The sign on the door to room 103 welcomes visitors in four languages. Young Sam (all names are pseudonyms) greeted us when we walked in. "What's been happening at school lately?" we asked him. His eyes sparkled as a big grin spread across his face. "Oh!" he said. "We had so much fun last week! We had our Readers Theatre Festival. Our group did The Three Billy Goats Gruff, and I was the biggest billy goat. My dad, mom, and grandma came to watch. They clapped and clapped!"

Natalia, Sam's teacher, explained more:

Last year, our faculty set a goal to improve family involvement. We decided that we wanted to become a "welcoming school." We read Joyce Epstein's [2001] book about developing partnerships and thought about small changes that could make a big difference in how welcomed families felt in our classrooms and at our school. The festivals we have in room 103 are an example. I'll do six of them this year: two Readers Theatre festivals; two poetry festivals, for children to read their favorite poems aloud; and two writers' festivals, when children read their best writing aloud. The children create invitations for each of these, which they take home. I also post the invitations on our class and school websites. Lots of family members and even some community members attend. It's not much extra work for me, and it has had such a positive impact on children's attitudes about reading and writing. Our adult visitors enjoy it, too!

Decades of research have underscored what both Sam and Natalia have experienced. When families feel welcome in schools and participate actively in children's education, children's attendance, interest, motivation, general achievement, and reading achievement improve (Padak &...