

## TOP TEN

### Moves to Advocate for Families

- 1.** Reach out to each family prior to the new school year. Introduce yourself and find out preferred modes of, times for, and language for communication. Get to know caregivers, siblings, and other close relatives, in addition to parents; if possible, arrange for a home visit.
- 2.** Identify a translator if you don't speak a family's primary language. Make arrangements for oral and written communication across the year.
- 3.** Invite parents to tell you about their child: his or her passions, hopes, fears, responsibilities, friendships, and significant life events. Ask families about their hoped-for goals for their student and share your goals as well.
- 4.** Ask parents, grandparents, and caregivers about their occupations, hobbies, and areas of specialty. Might they share them with their child's class?
- 5.** On back-to-school night, explain the importance of self-selected independent reading. Model how you think aloud while reading picture books, sharing questions, connections, and responses to the text. Help them understand what you believe about reading and why you teach and assess the ways in which you do. Follow up with families who aren't able to attend back-to-school night.
- 6.** Communicate with families about the books striving readers are bringing home. You might also provide families with a list of general questions that they can use to initiate a conversation about the books their kids are reading; for example, "What surprised you about this book? How has it changed your thoughts and feelings?"
- 7.** Urge families to provide a reliable time and calm place for students to read at home every day. Share that homework will consist mostly of reading without traditional worksheets.
- 8.** Explain the importance of talk in children's literacy development in all primary languages—and thus, the importance of conversing at the dinner table, storytelling, sharing family lore, and talking about the texts family members are reading. Encourage family members to model their own reading lives for their children.
- 9.** Ask families to secure public library cards for their children—and explain or demonstrate how if they're not sure.
- 10.** Invite families to participate in family literature circles. Choose short texts such as magazine articles or short stories that are easy to read, translate as needed, and circulate electronically.