

# "Parents as agents of change"

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## Main Objectives:

The main objective is to make conscious the role of the parents in creating a culture of thinking beyond the classroom and to understand that families are also agents of change for this process.

## Summary of work:

Education is a shared responsibility. In Edu1st, parents have an important role within the schools. It is crucial for us to encourage the families to partakers in their children's learning, and to understand that they also belong in this environment where their children learn and grow for such a significant amount of hours each day. All parents are invited to participate in planned activities and volunteer in school life, familiarizing themselves with the curriculum through projects that children take home as games, such as "I Spy" and "The Thinking Bag." These games are a good way to expose parents to the language of thinking and to the routines that are used to promote fun and learning in the schools. By absorbing the routines and language that their children use in school at home, parents strengthen the children's habits of mind and foster a culture of thinking at their homes as well.

Undoubtedly, parents are key players in their children's learning. However, parents are also individuals in permanent construction of new knowledge, and have the right to learn with and from their children in the creation of a culture of thinking. According to our philosophy, education is a fundamental right of all people. This means that all people in the community, including parents, should understand that the right to learn is not lost with age, and should be invited to participate in the thinking routines, learn from them, and each other. To achieve this, there need to be clear and solid lines of communication. The VESS model emphasizes an open door policy that is complemented by several communication strategies that ensure that both the school and families are up to date with how each child is doing while he or she is in the other context. Parents are also invited to participate in forums within the school, where topics range from parenting, to child development, to thinking, giving the parents further opportunity to growth.

Nowadays considering all the changes that are occurring worldwide, it is necessary and crucial to reshape education. Our main goal is to shape students with the necessary tools to adapt in a society full of challenges and new generations. In this process of education it is imperative to involve families and break the paradigm that "schools' responsibility is to form students and provide all the necessary knowledge within the different areas". It is fundamental that education transcend beyond the schools; on the contrary, education should be aimed to create environments and cultures of thinking where students give purpose and meaning to the skills they develop daily. With this in mind, we consider parents are a fundamental agent of change, extension and sustainability to a culture of thinking that goes beyond a classroom. It is crucial for parents to be involved in a functional way, understanding the importance of their role in shaping individuals who can think critically, be autonomous, independent and able to make their own decisions responsibly and ethically.

In this change of vision and paradigms, the educational organization and the role of the teacher are keys to involve and educate parents. If parents are able to understand their role and act on it, the extension of a culture of thinking will be more effective and sustainable.

As Educators we have to make sure parents live this process with enthusiasm and responsibility while making them characters in the changes and achievements that their children go through and accomplish. Parents need to understand that the sooner they start, the better. Early childhood education is far more important than most parents think; it is never too late to start guiding them into a VESS life (Meaningful Life with Balance and Wisdom) while assuming a shared responsibility in the education of their children.

In Education First, we pay attention not only to our students; on the contrary, parents are also a big target in developing and creating a sustainable culture of thinking. We involve parents in the process of developing habits of mind and basic needs for the 21st century: Explore, communicate, empower, give sense of belonging, and contribution among others. We incorporate different strategies and have clear evidence that the culture we are building in our schools are reaching others:

Parents Anecdotes: Every day we feel the parents' interest in taking responsibility in the education of their children. It is rewarding to hear anecdotes that allow Educators within Edu1st schools, to see how children are using the thinking strategies in different contexts.

Thinking Bag – Special Projects for Home: It is crucial for parents to understand that during the early childhood ages, children learn in various ways. Fun, laughter, family, and friends are a crucial part of their development. With this in mind, we keep any kind of structured educational projects within the school. On the other hand, in order to involve parents, we do send special projects in what we call “Thinking Bag” to create an engaging moment of fun and learning between parents and students. In these bags we incorporate different thinking strategies and provocative materials in order to create a special moment at home.

I – Spy: Thinking, values and ethics should come together at all times; with this in mind, we created this project in order to reinforce the use of values at home.

Volunteer Parents and Open Door Policy: In our schools, parents are crucial to our educational model. Throughout the year we develop and create activities that involve parents in our daily life. International Institute: This is an extensive course that even though was first created for teachers, have been found to be a key tool for parents to be involved in understanding how education has changed. It also provides parents with different strategies that can be used at home to extend the culture of thinking we build at our schools.