***Thursday, February 16, 2017***

Dr. Minh-Anh Hodge

President for National Association for Bilingual Education

11006 Veirs Mill Rd. #L-1

Wheaton, MD 20902

Dear Dr. Minh-Anh Hodge,

My name is Xuan Wang. I come from North Carolina. As a bilingual teacher, I have been committed to the teaching and studies of bilingual education. As is known to all that development of bilingual education has always been confronted with difficulties in the U.S. In fact, it has experienced recognition, limitation, recovery, rejection and development. Even today, it is still an issue of dispute, and the focus of disputes lies in whether it should be set up and whether its emphasis should be Pro-English or Pro-bilingual.

First, I would like to show my support for the setting of bilingual education since elementary school. According to the studies of the Center for Applied Linguistics, the younger children touch their second languages, the easier they succeed in the future. Bilingual children have basically four edges. The first lies in cognition as bilingual users can shift freely between the two languages, and their brains tend to be active and agile with better logic, concentration and memory. The second edge is seen in social ability, as a bilingual environment helps maintain and strengthen children’s emotional connection among family, community and school. Bilingual children are able to make new friends with their second language and establish strong interpersonal relationship. In the diverse society, it is a very important social skill. The third is the ability to learn. For bilingual children, their proficiency of mother language is in close relationship with how much they adapt their school and get good grades. As they are able to think in two languages, they have more flexible ways of thinking, stronger ability to read and learn. The fourth is globalization. In the brand new age of cultural language communication, skilled use of foreign languages is in line with the trend of globalization as an individual edge.

Second, how bilingual education can be better implemented in education involves much issues both theoretically and educationally. There are four types of bilingual education, including: 1. Immersion program-using a language different from the family language at school; 2. Maintenance Bilingual education-children use their family language at the beginning of their school life, but gradually turn to school language in some subjects while remaining using family language in other subjects; 3. Transitional bilingual education (TBE)-students use partly or completely mother language at the beginning of their school life while turn to school language only later; 4. Two-way bilingual education —Dual language programs in which English and a second language are both used in classes consisting of ELLs and native-English speakers. Some educators, however, encourages only one of these teaching methods, which causes certain limitation. In fact, the school should carry out a complete bilingual education plan by integrating these bilingual education models together in education, and classes using different models should be opened.

Fred Genesee is a Professor of psychology at McGill University. He specializes in second language acquisition and bilingualism research. According to Dr. Genesee, children living in an English - speaking environment will not adapt second language education in school at the beginning, so such education should be suspended; simultaneous learning later will largely improve the effect of bilingual education. Therefore, based on the proficiency, age, learning ability of different children, different teaching model should be applied. For children who have just immigrated into the US, it will be easier for them to adapt if Maintenance Bilingual education is applied at the beginning while Two-way bilingual education is provided later.

Finally, bilingual education is a long process. Bilingual education in many places, however, is too short, as it is only carried out in elementary schools or just started from junior or senior high school. Many students, as a result, do not know where to continue after graduating from elementary school as there is hardly link or cooperation between schools of different stages. Besides, money is another problem. Schools should hire qualified teachers for such education. Only when schools, parents and communities are effectively connected can students make more progress. I hope that my letter helps promote your development in bilingual education.

Thanks for your attention and looking forward to hearing from you!

With Regards,

Xuan