

# Spotlight on Dr. Don Vu

Dr. Don Vu has been an elementary school teacher and principal for 24 years.

Dr. Vu and his school staff chartered a literacy campaign in 2013 to foster the love of reading in all students. In 2017 he received the Celebrate Literacy Award from the California Reading Association for his outstanding leadership in literacy. In 2018 his school was one of five schools nationally to receive the Exemplary Reading Program Award from the International Literacy Association. In 2020 the school received the California Distinguished School Award for its work in closing the opportunity gap for all kids.

Dr. Vu understands the challenges children face when learning a new language and culture, having fled Vietnam with his family in 1975. He also knows that reading can be transformative and life-changing. Dr. Vu continues to spread the message that literacy can change the world through his work with state and national literacy organizations as well as his writing in publications such as *Edutopia*. He currently serves on the national advisory boards of Scholastic Book Fairs and the Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program. His new book, *Life, Literacy, and the Pursuit of Happiness*, is a call to action for all educators who want to build a school culture of literacy to empower all students as they pursue their American Dream.

Dr. Vu offers virtual and in-person interactive sessions to educators at all school levels. These engaging sessions will spark conversation and inspire educators to explore diversity and build a culture of literacy.



## Sessions include:

- Life, Literacy, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Creating a Culture of Literacy for All
- Finding the Audacity of Equality in the Stories of Immigrants and Refugees
- Building Background Knowledge through Multimedia: Video Book Talks, Trailers, and Read-Alouds
- The Summer Leap: Using Summer to Help Bridge the Literacy Gap for SED students
- See the Change, Be the Change: Exploring Windows and Mirrors in Children's Literature
- Passport to Tolerance: Exploring Diversity through Children's Literature
- A Book Club for Everyone: The Importance of Diversity in Books
- Engaging Immigrant and Refugee Families: Bridging the Language and Cultural Gap



[*Life, Literacy, and the Pursuit of Happiness* is] one of the most important books for educators today. Don Vu helps us reimagine what is possible when we create a culture of literacy and commit to student choice, agency, and independent reading.

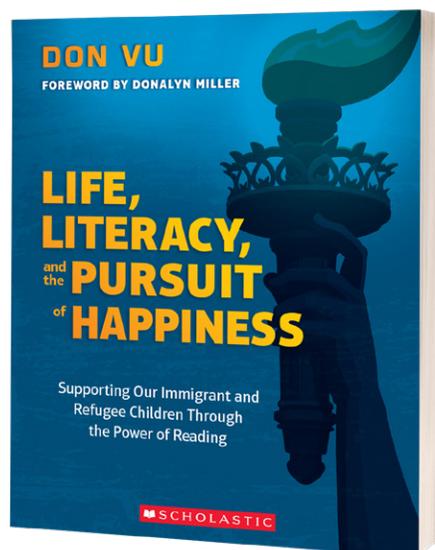
—Franki Sibberson, 2020 President of the National Council of Teachers of English, teacher, librarian, and author

## Professional Book

# Life, Literacy, and the Pursuit of Happiness

**A call to action for building a culture of literacy for all students in their pursuit of the American Dream.**

Award-winning principal and literacy advocate Dr. Don Vu examines six conditions for building a school's culture of literacy (Commitment, Collection, Clock, Conversation, Connection, and Celebration), showing how to create an environment where all students—especially immigrant and refugee children—can thrive. Dr. Vu's work is a testament to the transformative power of reading—a key to opening the door for all to realize the American Dream.



- ✓ **Commitment:** Reflecting on personal limitations, educators can broaden their social experiences and make a commitment to understand students and families who are new to America. What does the American Dream mean to you? What does it mean to them? How does literacy play a role in this?
- ✓ **Collection:** Educators can help students find the right book for them by ensuring that their book collections are diverse and engaging. How can we ensure that books will reflect students' interests and backgrounds? How do we get funding to buy more of these books?
- ✓ **Clock:** The more kids read, the better readers they become. Students need time to read in school and at home. What can educators do to help students and families—especially those who don't have the time and resources to do so—find time to read?
- ✓ **Conversation:** Literate conversations—informal conversations about books and stories—are important to developing language and cultural skills for all students. Educators can provide fun and engaging ways for students to have these conversations throughout the school day.
- ✓ **Connection:** Once we have a diverse collection of books, how do we really connect kids to these stories and go beyond windows and mirrors? How can we instill the audacity of equality within all kids so that they know they are equal and deserve justice in America?
- ✓ **Celebration:** Traditions and ceremonies are important aspects of culture-building in schools. Educators can celebrate the power of literacy and its impact on all students and families by honoring diverse stories throughout the world as well as within the classrooms.



Serving immigrant and refugee students and families is much more than teaching English as a second language. How can we use the power of literacy in schools to embrace the needs of all students, to instill the audacity of equality in them, and empower them to pursue their American Dream?

– Don Vu, Ed.D.