

# PROMISING PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES



An annual collection from the members of the  
**National Network of Partnership Schools**

Johns Hopkins University

2018

Edited by

Brenda G. Thomas, Marsha D. Greenfield, R. Tyler Ames, Megumi G. Hine, and Joyce L. Epstein

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**University of Alabama Parent Teacher Academy, Tuscaloosa, AL**

**for the photographs of partnership activities in *Promising Partnership Practices 2018*.**

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#### **For more information:**

**After November 1, 2018, the NNPS address will be:**

**National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)  
Johns Hopkins University  
School of Education  
Johns Hopkins University  
2800 North Charles Street, Suite 420  
Baltimore, MD 21218**

phone: (410) 516-2318

fax : (410) 516-8890

e-mail: [nnps@jhu.edu](mailto:nnps@jhu.edu)

[www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org)

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# INTRODUCTION

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## ***Promising Partnership Practices 2018***

Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., Director  
National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)

This book is simply inspiring! The schools, districts, states, and organizations in *Promising Partnership Practices 2018* report how they applied research-based approaches to organize their programs of family and community engagement. Members of NNPS form teams, write goal-linked plans, and use the framework of six types of involvement to engage more and different families in activities that contribute to a welcoming school climate and student success in school.

There are 70 good ideas in this book—53 activities from schools and 17 from districts, organizations, and states in NNPS, including 2 international partners in Ireland and Scotland. The contributors are from economically, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse communities. In short, the activities were implemented in locations like yours!

The book is arranged in five sections. Look for these activities and other great ideas. . .

- **Academic Achievements (Reading, Math, Science).** See how one school worked with the public library to encourage summer reading to reduce the “summer learning slide.” Read how a school partnered with a local grocery store to bring mathematics to life. See how STEM activities have expanded to STEAM and to STREAM, as schools engaged parents with students in science, technology, engineering and math activities with new links to art and reading.
- **Multiple, Mixed, or Other Subjects (Art, Social Studies, Combined Subjects).** Read how a school transformed its space into a familiar game board and set engagement activities in reading, math, and science at stations along the road to Candy Land. See how another school organized student-led conferences with parents to discuss the students’ achievement goals.
- **Non-Academic Outcomes (Behavior, Health and Wellness, Transitions, College and Career Readiness).** See how parents were guided to work with their preschool children to practice fine motor skills to get “ready” for kindergarten. Consider how parents gave lunchtime talks about their careers and education to middle grades students. Examine how 9<sup>th</sup> graders conducted student-led conferences with their parents to reflect on their adjustment to and achievements in high school.
- **School Climate and a Welcoming Environment.** See how schools partnered with parents, the faith community, and a local food bank to provide students who receive free or reduced-price meals at school take home food over the weekend. Check the schedule set by one school’s principal to connect with all families throughout the year, without requiring too many meetings at school.
- **District, Organization, and State Leadership.** See how district leaders used *PowToon* and *Raw Shorts* to create videos on topics of partnerships for families and for Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). Read how a nation’s policy inspired having children on all schools’ ATPs. See how and why an organization monitored the progress of schools that received small grants to improve family and community engagement.

Enjoy searching for and reading these and many more goal-linked partnership activities. Consider adapting them or inventing others in your location to engage all families, improve the school climate, and increase students’ success in school.

### **In This Collection . . .**

Take a look! There are four cross-referenced Tables of Contents (TOC) to identify activities that will help you strengthen your partnership program.

1. **GOALS FOR PARTNERSHIPS.** This TOC lists family and community engagement activities by academic goal (i.e., reading, math, science, other subjects); behavioral goal (student behavior, health, multicultural awareness, transitions, and plans for college or career); and the goal to ensure a welcoming school climate for all partners in children’s education.

**Also, see excellent activities from districts, organizations, and state** to strengthen leadership and guide schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships to improve their programs.

2. **SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT.** This TOC identifies activities that strengthen **parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community.** Although each activity is identified with *one* main type of involvement, each practice may activate several types of involvement.
3. **SCHOOL AND POLICY LEVELS.** This TOC lists activities by school level—preschool, elementary, middle, and high schools. Remember—many activities implemented at one school level may be used or adapted at other school levels. Also, see activities for district, organization, and state leaders.
4. **CONTRIBUTORS.** This TOC identifies the contributors to this book, by location, city/state, and title of activity. Activities developed in one community (urban, suburban, or rural) may be adapted to meet conditions and interests in other locations.

**Also see . . .**

**NNPS WEBSITE.** This edition of *Promising Partnership Practices 2018* will be posted on the NNPS website.

One print copy of *Promising Partnership Practices 2018* is sent to each member site in NNPS. See the Order Form on the website for additional print copies.

**NNPS SAMPLERS.** NNPS *SAMPLERS* provide an easy way to review ten good activities from prior years' books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The *Samplers* focus on family and community engagement in **reading, writing, math, science, health, the arts, homework, attendance, behavior, career awareness/postsecondary planning, transitions to new schools, involving fathers, involving grandparents, involving families with students in summer learning, increasing family awareness of school tests and assessments,** and for improving partnership programs in **preschools, middle schools, and high schools.** Each *Sampler* includes a one- page summary of research on the featured topic. See all *Samplers* in the section Success Stories.

**MEMBERS ONLY.** Members of NNPS can access prior books of *Promising Partnership Practices* from 2009 to 2018 and all *Samplers*. The **Members Only Code** starting in January 2019 will be **19NNPSmem.** Members will be reminded in monthly E-Briefs when the new code is activated.

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### National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University

Established by Dr. Joyce L. Epstein and her colleagues at Johns Hopkins University in 1996, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) provides professional development and on-going technical assistance to strengthen leadership for programs of school, family, and community partnerships. NNPS assists schools, districts, organizations, and state departments of education to develop and sustain research-based partnership programs that contribute to student learning and development.

- Each Partnership School strengthens its program by forming an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), writing goal-linked partnership plans, and conducting partnership practices using the framework of Six Types of Involvement to engage all families in their children's education in varied and meaningful ways.
- Districts, organizations, and states are guided to develop policies, provide leadership, and directly facilitate schools' ATPs to organize, implement, evaluate, and continually improve their programs of family and community engagement.

All members of NNPS benefit from on-going research at Johns Hopkins University. In annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*, members share best practices with each other to improve school climate, engage all families, and increase student success in school.

For more information, visit [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org).



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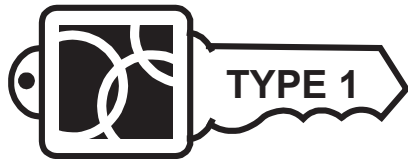
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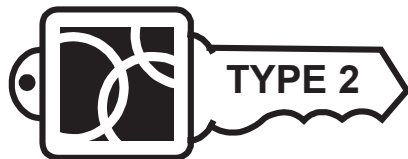
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# THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

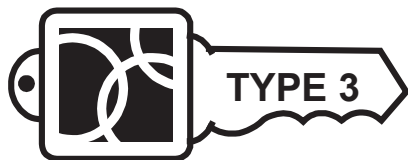
## EPSTEIN'S SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT



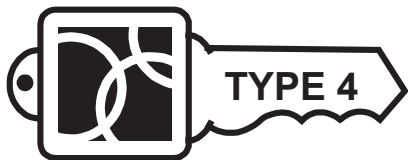
**PARENTING:** Assist families in understanding child and adolescent development and in setting home conditions that support children as students at each grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.



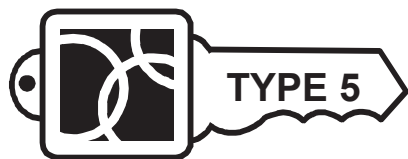
**COMMUNICATING:** Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.



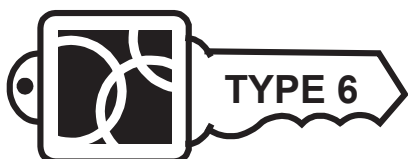
**VOLUNTEERING:** Improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school and in other locations to support students and school programs.



**LEARNING AT HOME:** Involve families with their children in learning at home, including homework, other curriculum-related activities, and individual course and program decisions.



**DECISION MAKING:** Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations.



**COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY:** Coordinate community resources and services for students, families, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.



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# 1

## ACADEMIC GOALS



Practices for Types 1-6 in this section involve families and community partners to help students meet academic goals in reading and literacy, math, science, other academic subjects, or multiple subjects.



## BETHEL AME CHURCH TUTORING

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ARTHUR EDDY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
SAGINAW, MI

**I**n third grade, children continue to learn to read. Then, it is said, they are expected to read to learn. Of course, children continue to gain reading skills in the older grades, but also focus on reading books and materials in all subjects. Many districts and schools have set clear goals for all students to read on grade level by the end of third grade—the first grade that students take state tests in reading. The aim is to increase students’ success and reduce the risk that they will fall further behind as they meet more challenging reading tasks.

In Michigan, Arthur Eddy Elementary School partnered with community members from the Bethel AME Church to provide support and tutoring in reading for 3rd grade students. The volunteers—mostly retired teachers—and a professor from a local university met with the principal about their willingness to assist the school with its goal for third grade readers. They worked with the third grade teachers who identified the skills that students needed to master and available resources. The professor also guided the volunteers with a plan for how to tutor students on the required skills, and offered other materials that could help the volunteers and the children.

All 3rd grade students were invited to participate in the program for one and a half hours after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays from October to March. About 40 students participated at all or some sessions over 16 weeks. The tutoring sessions were conducted at the school, followed by dinner for the students. Then, a school bus took all children home. It was serious work, but, as one student assessed, “It was fun. I got to work with my friend.” All materials and other costs were covered by Bethel AME. The

school provided the late evening bus.

Parents provided written consent for their child to stay after school, and parents were invited to sit in on the tutoring sessions. The children were encouraged to read to their parents in the evening and to keep a reading log.

At the conclusion of the program, volunteers sponsored a celebration dinner for students and their parents. “Did the tutoring work?” asked one of the tutors who was a former teacher and administrator. He wanted to know: “Did the students show an increase in reading skills after working with us?” Results were positive. The school’s 3rd grade reading scores on the state assessment were 12% higher than in the previous year.

One of Arthur Eddy’s administrators said they were “well pleased with the outcome,” and the district superintendent shared the school’s success with the practice in a speech at a local forum. The program demonstrated that schools interested in a tutoring program for helping students read at grade level by the end of grade three must select tutors who are fully committed to the 16-week program.

Arthur Eddy administrators believe that they can find other retired teachers who are willing to volunteer to tutor students. As word of the well-organized tutoring program spread in the community, the school began to field phone calls from other community members who asked about volunteer opportunities. The partnership program has documented an increase in the number of volunteers at the school.

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*Shonda Bray*  
Title I ELA  
*sbray@spsd.net*

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## C. A. M. P. READ A LOT!

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DELMAE HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
FLORENCE, SC

TYPE 4

**T**he Action Team for Partnerships at Delmae Heights Elementary School knows how to get everyone engaged. At a camp-themed reading night, every teacher helped run the event. The teachers talked over their goals for parent involvement and discussed how to spotlight reading in ways that would appeal to students and parents. Named for Community And Magnificent Partners, C. A. M. P. was attended by about 300 students, parents, and community partners, and many teachers.

Families were served a pizza dinner when they arrived and played BINGO while they ate. BINGO winners choose from a vast collection of new books, purchased as prizes for the event with a small grant from their partner at Francis Marion University. Then, everyone went to a classroom to participate in a literacy session. There were four session topics: reading accuracy, fluency, comprehension, and stamina/engagement. Parents and students could choose to attend two sessions. Each topic was covered in the same way and with the same resources in three classrooms to accommodate the big crowd. The resulting twelve classrooms were staffed by 2-3 teachers who presented research-based reading strategies on how parents can help their children on reading at home, and could practice with their child in the session and use at home.

To help the parents decide, in advance, which sessions they wanted to attend, they received pre-camp questions such as: Does your child use reading strategies when he/she comes to an unknown word? and Does your child read as if he/she is reading a list of words rather than sounding like he/she is reading sentences? By providing questions in advance, parents could listen to their child read before

coming to C.A.M.P. Read a Lot! and select the most meaningful session for them. One teacher reported, “One of my [student’s] parents said that she always thought her child was a good reader because she could say the words, but now she realized reading was about more than that.” Several parents reached out to the teachers to confer about which sessions would be best to attend based on the teachers’ observations of their children in the classroom.

At the event, community partners set up displays linked to literacy. A prior teacher at the school is a published author who came to talk with parents and students, answered questions, and signed books. A book store sent a representative to share STEM literature because Delmae is a certified STEM school. The bookstore brought a Lego robot to the school for students to explore and use, along with several baskets of goodies for door prizes. A public library supervisor brought a display of library books, library information, and a form for students and parents to apply for library cards. One teacher remarked that the school has built strong connections in the community: “Our community literacy partners support us in so many ways and we truly appreciate all they do for our students.”

C.A.M.P. Read a Lot! was a clear success and much of the credit goes to the teachers who were fully invested and the school administrators who strongly supported the event, including providing teachers with planning time so that their committees could work together on all aspects of activity.

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*Jill Russell*  
*Read to Succeed Literacy Coach*  
*jillrussell@fsd1.org*

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READING & LITERACY

## CAMP OUT WITH A GOOD BOOK

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WESTWOOD ELEMENTARY  
WESTLAKE, LA

Camping trips always bring memories, so Westwood Elementary—a K-2 school where all students receive free breakfast and lunch—hosted a camping night in the school building. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers knew it would be a memorable experience. Although families did not stay overnight, tents were set up as reading nooks, complete with sleeping bags. Lanterns and flashlights were available to provide light inside the tents. Parents and students could sit around a “campfire” to read a good book.

Teachers and parents provided camping equipment including loaner tents and sleeping bags. Parent and teacher volunteers set everything up, and later, took the things down and returned them to their owners. The authentic camping equipment caught the eye of several attendees, with one parent commenting, “This was a lot of fun. I loved how there were actually tents and stuff set up.”

More than 100 students and 175 parents came to camp. Aside from reading in the tents, other reading attractions were set up. For example, students could make “Beginning Sound S’mores” for which they were given a picture of each ingredient of a s’more: marshmallow, chocolate, and graham crackers. Then they matched upper and lower case letters for different words. There also were word-building rocks for students and families to mix and match, and picnic tables with supplies to make bookmarks. There were grade-level reading activities and obstacle courses. Refreshments were provided by Partners in Education. One parent evaluated, “We had a great time. I liked how we were together as a family reading.”

The low-key atmosphere of camp encouraged reading for pleasure, and enabled teachers

to interact comfortably with families. Teachers and parents discussed ways to include family reading time as part of a daily routine. As an added benefit, families were able to talk with local police and firemen who set informational booths at the event about their services.

As they left the camp grounds, each family member was given a s’mores treat bag with a note attached reminding them to take time for “s’more family reading.” This was deemed “Cool!” by students.

It was clear that creating a camp atmosphere where students and parents could relax with a book and enjoy a few reading-related activities was a good way to reinforce students’ reading for pleasure. Students seemed “supercharged” with positive attitudes about school, learning, and reading.

The Action Team for Partnerships, teachers, and administrators at Westwood point to the importance of planning and coordinating a themed activity—such as a camp—and enabling parents and students to move through the space to enjoy each station. They attributed the good turnout to good marketing via school newsletters, flyers, the school website, electronic school signs, facebook, and student-designed posters throughout the school and community. Many parents were aware of the event because they had contributed a tent or a flashlight, or volunteered to help with the set-up. The activity was a success because it aligned with the school’s overall goals for improving students’ attitudes toward reading and increasing school, family, and community partnerships with many new families.

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*Janice “Sissy” Elliott*  
Teacher  
[sissy.elliott@cpsb.org](mailto:sissy.elliott@cpsb.org)

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TYPE 4

READING & LITERACY

## LITERACY CHALLENGE

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GANON GIL PRESCHOOL  
BEACHWOOD, OH

TYPE 4

**A** Every year, Ganon Gil Preschool of the Temple-Tifereth Israel hosts a Scholastic book fair where families can come and buy books with their children. This year the preschool took some steps ahead of time to build interest in the fair. Each student was given a reading chart that showed a box for each day. They colored in the box each day if they read a children's book at home on their own or with a family partner. Parents helped their child by reading with them and by helping them color in the chart to record the experience. Students who read at home on 10 of the 14 days preceding the fair could turn in their chart and be entered into a lottery drawing for a prize.

Each classroom conducted its own drawing, ensuring one winner in each class. The winners were announced to families and were given a \$10.00 gift certificate from the school that could be used to buy a book at the book fair. All students were given stickers to recognize their efforts to read at home for pleasure.

The lead-up to the fair was exciting. Children were heard talking with other students about the books they were reading at home. A couple of teachers asked students' family members (including a grandfather and older sibling) to come in and read to the class. To help build interest, teachers talked to the children every day about the literacy challenge and encouraged all students to participate by reading at home.

The fair was attended by 50 students and 40 parents—a large enough crowd to require the help of all 20 teachers in attendance. Not only were books purchased, but several families sat down and read to their children (and other children) as well.

Family members bought enough books that the preschool's earned credit from Scholastic was enough to buy books for each classroom and to donate books to the WomenSafe organization. This is a non-profit organization that provides free support to anyone experiencing violence in the home or in a relationship. The planned donation to WomenSafe was advertised in advance by the Ganon Gil Preschool so that families knew that their purchases at the book fair would benefit the community group.

Because the book fair was held around Thanksgiving, the books for WomenSafe were donated to the organization's holiday gift drive. Ganon Gil's students understood that they were involved in one of the school's Social Action activities to benefit the larger community. The children commented on the good that the donated books would do for other children who were in need of extra support. One student asked, "Can we please do this again?"

The preschool's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) spearheaded the idea for the literacy challenge prior to the book fair. The team's discussion and decision is an example of how an ATP can take the lead in improving a school and its connections with students' families and the community. Most importantly, by focusing on at-home reading for young students, Ganon Gil Preschool was able to encourage students and parents to spend time reading together.

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*Lori Kowit*  
*Director of Early Childhood Education*  
*lkowit@ttti.org*

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READING & LITERACY

## MOM AND ME BOOK CLUB

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EDWIN MARKHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
PASCO, WA

Children enjoy good stories and sharing them with family members can make the stories even better. Edwin Markham Elementary School created book clubs for students and parents to read together and discuss their ideas.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and other teachers brainstormed about positive experiences they had in their own children's schools. One favored idea was for teachers of grades 3 to 6 to select a grade-appropriate book for students to read, which parents also could read. The book club meetings were held in the afternoon on one of the school's early release days.

The ATP sent home flyers advertising the book selected for each grade level, why a parent should read the same book, and the club meeting day to discuss the book. The tear-off enabled parents to indicate if they needed to borrow the book from the school or could provide their own copy. The flyers were sent home two months prior to the book club meeting to give enough time for the school to get the books and for everyone to read them.

The discussion at the book club meeting was fun. A photo booth was on hand for students and parents to take pictures, and snacks were readily available. The discussions of each grade's book began with a film clip from a movie adaptation of the book, a trailer for the movie adaptation, or an interview of the author available for free on YouTube. The student and parent discussions began with a game of Book Question Jenga. Questions were printed on labels and attached to Jenga blocks, which were pulled from a Jenga tower deftly (or not so deftly) by children and parents. Each time a person pulled

a block from the tower, they answered the discussion question and others added their views and comments. Several copies of the Jenga tower were printed to allow for a game of Jenga and discussion at each table. This increased participation and connections in smaller groups. The discussion helped children "see how we dive deep into a book and have a discussion," according to one parent who attended.

For grade 3, an alternate game was developed based on popsicle sticks and building blocks. Attendees pulled a stick and answered the question printed on it. Then, they set the block in place the way someone would set up a series of Dominos. After several questions were answered, the students could set off a chain reaction to knock down all the blocks.

At each grade's book club meeting, participants played a few rounds of Scattegories. A die with letters on it was rolled to identify a starting letter. Then, groups worked together to state words starting with that letter and relating to the book. One parent noted that their favorite part of the activity was "how easy it was to talk about the book because of the games."

The total cost of the book clubs was just over \$100. Several enthused parents helped defray costs by preparing and providing the snacks for each club meeting. The ATP found that it was a good idea to have two grades conduct their club meetings on the same day. For example, 3rd and 4th graders met on the same day in different rooms.

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*Amber Hanes*  
Teacher, ATP Co-Chair  
[ahanes@psd1.org](mailto:ahanes@psd1.org)

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## READ WITH ME READING NIGHT

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RIDGE VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
KENNEWICK, WA

**W**hat is your favorite childhood book? Members of the Ridge View Elementary School community in Kennewick, WA, were invited to consider that question and read their favorite childhood book (or parts of it) aloud to students, teachers, and families. The readings occurred at Read with Me Reading Night to support the school's goals for improving school, family, and community partnerships and to help attain literacy goals for students.

At Read with Me Reading Night, students and families could participate at any of the many reading-related stations. The stations included book, story, or excerpt story readings by a police officer, student athletes, and others from the community. One station featured an overview by a reading teacher of the school's reading curriculum. Parents could learn how their child's work would progress through the years, and could ask the teacher questions. The rotation among stations was timed with PA announcements to move to the next activity.

A station in the library offered a free book for each student, based on their grade level. Students in grades K-3 received books from the Reading Foundation; students in grades 4-5 participated in a book swap. Families sent in books for the swap several days in advance.

The community readers introduced themselves and described how reading affects them personally and professionally. They read their favorite childhood story and answered questions from the students and parent. Said one parent, "We learned how reading is used in the community." The children liked all of the stories and books, with one student remarking, "I liked hearing the people read to us. I liked getting a free book too."

Ridge View's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers agreed that it was necessary to identify volunteers ahead of time to ease the stress of planning a large event like Read with Me, and that they needed to find large spaces for large group readings. They collected RSVP's from families so that they knew the approximate headcount and were able to place activities in rooms that would accommodate the crowd.

The resources included a photo booth, where families could take a free picture of themselves. As they left the school, families were given a bag of popcorn and a treat bag. They were asked to complete a survey with their reactions to and suggestions for Read with Me. The ATP followed up with an e-mail survey to obtain feedback and recommendations from all members of the school staff.

The ATP wrote thank you notes to the community readers who were featured at Read with me, and to everyone who donated supplies or other services at the event.

About 149 families attended Read with Me. The strong turnout was attributed to the varied invitations and reminders via school flyers and invitations to families, website, reader board, e-mails, texts, and personal communications with families. Said one teacher, "I thought our first reading night was a huge success. We had a great turnout and everyone was engaged and having fun. It was a great way to bring community members into our school."

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*Irma Janosky & Leslee Heitz*  
*ATP Co-Chairs*

*[Irma.Janosky@ksd.org](mailto:Irma.Janosky@ksd.org) / [Leslee.Heitz@ksd.org](mailto:Leslee.Heitz@ksd.org)*

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## SCHOOL AND FAMILY LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS

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NOBLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OH

**S**trong programs of school, family, and community partnerships find helpful ways to incorporate community resources. Public libraries are a great place to connect school, families, and students for advancing literacy learning. Noble Elementary found that the local library was eager to collaborate.

Most students in Noble's preschool class qualify for free or reduced-price meals and about one third of the students are in families that are new immigrants or refugees, and who speak little or no English. Many families in all demographic groups were not yet connected with the local library.

Pre-K teachers contacted the library and found that they were willing to open an hour early, once a month for Pre-K students and their families. On these days, parents or other family members came to school with the students and the entire class walked across the street to the library. The librarian led the children in music, conducted movement activities, and read books aloud to the children. She also modeled reading strategies for parents such as making predictions about the text or using pictures to make sense of foreign words, and showed them how to handle a book appropriately. She did everything she could to help students and parents see that reading was engaging and fun.

Each visit included time for families to explore the library, read to their children, and check out books. The early hour and smaller crowds allowed the librarian to work with each of the refugee families. This process required a translator and took more time. One of the refugee parents spoke both English and their native language and served as a translator.

During these visits, the librarian discussed all of the services that might be of interest and value to each family.

The monthly visits to the library were popular with all families. Almost every child had a family member come with them each month. The parents chatted with each other and the teacher during the walk to the library, which fostered a sense of community. The children seemed to benefit from the extra time with a parent and with the librarian. As they grew to know each other, parents talked openly with the teacher about their backgrounds, strengths, and needs. The strong connections were due, in large part, to the teacher's effort to make sure that every family felt included. The teacher took extra steps to contact the bilingual parent to translate a flyer so that all other parents would feel invited and welcomed.

Noble's Pre-K Action Team for Partnerships hopes that the frequent visits to the library of students, families, and the teacher will produce some linked results. They hope that (1) families gain new strategies for supporting their children's literacy learning at home; and (2) families become more comfortable and willing to come to school for other reasons to talk with a teacher, and attend a workshop, meeting, or other event featuring their children. Too often, families with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds feel unwelcome by the school and grow to avoid them. Noble's Pre-K practice of including all families in the library visits is a big win for productive partnerships.

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*Danielle Vigh*  
Early Childhood Specialist  
[D\\_Vigh@chuh.org](mailto:D_Vigh@chuh.org)

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## TEACHERS AT THE LIBRARY

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CANYON VIEW ELEMENTARY  
KENNEWICK, WA

TYPE 6

**W**hen the weather turns warm, students everywhere dream of summer fun. Summer is fun, but students experience serious learning loss if they disconnect entirely from academics. Then, they must work through remedial skills in the fall, before moving on to new, grade-level learning. Libraries around the country are conducting summer reading programs to keep students reading and to prevent “summer slide” in reading skills. Canyon View Elementary School’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and reading teachers collaborated with the local public library on a major activity—Teachers at the Library—for students to sign up for a summer reading program.

The first step was a family and student introduction and sign up at the library, with teachers present. Students and their families signed in and received a “passport” of activities and questions to complete in the library. The activities on the passport included signing up for a library card or renewing an old card; signing up for the summer reading program to prevent learning loss; listening to stories being read aloud; learning about many library services and activities; and checking out a book.

The reward for a completed passport was a Taco Ticket. These could be redeemed outside the library at a taco truck owned and operated by the parent of a student who volunteered to support the library event. Each taco ticket was for one free taco per family, but the families generally purchased additional tacos. Shaved ice also was available from a local company that donated the profits to the school’s PTO. While outside the library, students could play games

set up by the PE teacher. Several families found the weather and atmosphere pleasant enough to have a picnic dinner.

Inside the library, teachers from the school signed up to be story readers, help monitor the Lego League room, help with sign in, or be “roamers” who help students and families however needed. The teacher-read stories were a highlight for several attendees with one parent remarking, “Thank you for putting on this event. It was so nice to enjoy a family night with my family. The best part was getting to hear Mr. Dwain read aloud.” The school’s librarian chimed, “Hearing the teachers model the joy of reading books and seeing the delight on the faces of students at the event was priceless.” A schedule of teacher-readers was printed and distributed with the passports, with a different teacher reading aloud every 10 minutes.

As a good partner, the public library’s branch manager attended the school’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) meetings to plan the activity. About 88 students, 44 parents, 20 teachers and others participated with the goal of getting students to sign up for the library’s program to prevent a summer slide in reading skills. Said a parent, “What a fun event. Thank you [for] organizing this and for volunteering to be here.” In all, the event was welcoming. It sent a clear message to families that the school cares about them during the school year and in the summer, and that a relationship with the public library can be rewarding for their children.

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*Kim Estes*  
ATP Co-chair  
[kim.estes@ksd.org](mailto:kim.estes@ksd.org)

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READING & LITERACY

## FAMILY COUNTS – MATH NIGHT

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JOHN W. MOORE INTERMEDIATE  
FLORENCE, SC

**W**hen are we ever going to use this?” is a question lobbed at math teachers everywhere. Students at John W. Moore Intermediate got a good answer when school officials called on parents to serve as expert witnesses on how, when, and where math is used in real life. The school’s annual Math Night—this one titled Family Counts—was held in a local grocery store where students helped their parents calculate prices and compare brands.

At the store, students and parents were given a clipboard, pencil, and set of math challenges, based on grade-level math standards. They checked prices of store brands, compared other brands, explored bulk purchasing, and accounted for costs by volume. They discussed why cheaper is not always better, and then why cheaper sometimes is better. The completed challenges were exchanged for a prize of candy, pens, math-related bracelet, or other award. The prizes, clipboards, calculators, and pencils were purchased for \$250 and with a small grant from the school’s partners on family and community engagement at Francis Marion University. The math challenges and scenarios were developed by Moore’s STEM coach and math teachers to address 5th and 6th grade math standards. According to one student, the questions were easy at first, “but then it got hard.”

Teachers and administrators were on hand to address questions from students or parents. The teachers reported that the students “were eager to complete the challenges.” Students from two local high schools also helped out and earned community service credit for providing extra support at Moore’s math night. Most students’ questions were answered by the

parents, themselves, because they had a great deal of experience in grocery stores.

The evening set a flexible schedule. Students and parents could come any time between 6 p.m. to the store’s closing. Several families brought along siblings, and some used the opportunity to conduct their regular grocery shopping, as well.

Everyone seemed to benefit from the math applications. Students saw that their school skills had real value. Parent reported that they paid new attention to bulk pricing, reading labels, and cost comparisons to save money. The teachers distributed additional activities that parents and students could use on future shopping trips. A local newspaper reporter came to interview students, parents, and teachers for a feature article the next day.

About 50 families participated in the well-planned Math Night. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and administrators advertised steadily during the month preceding Family Counts—Math Night. Exit surveys from parents indicated that they saw greater importance in involving their children in grocery shopping, and expressed interest in similar future activities and supplemental math materials.

Students presented the grocery store with a banner signed by students and school staff to thank management for its cooperation. To build on this year’s good will, the ATP and others will work with the grocery store to provide a take-home meal or ingredients to participating families. Some of the regular customers at the store stopped to ask what was happening. The answer? Math was having a real good time.

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*Joanna McCumber*  
STEM Coach  
[jmccumber@fsd1.org](mailto:jmccumber@fsd1.org)

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## STUDENTS TEACHING PARENTS/SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

EASTGATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LINCOLN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
KENNEWICK, WA

**T** rue mastery is one step closer when students grasp concepts well enough to teach them to others. Students at two schools—Eastgate and Lincoln Elementary Schools—morphed into teachers to show, explain, and teach parents something about their work in school.

**Students Teaching Parents.** Eastgate is a diverse school serving about 78% Hispanic students, most of whom are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. With assistance from the district office, Eastgate leaders sent home a bilingual flyer to invite parents to come to math class, encouraging: “Your Student will be the Teacher.” Teachers also submitted a phone script and class roster for the district to call all parents in their home language to invite them to the Students Teaching Parents.

Teachers started the math lesson with the assistance of a translator and headsets for parents. Following the teacher’s instruction, students were given a math problem to reinforce the lesson. They explained the problem to their parent and showed how to solve it. When the student-parent pair had an answer they believed was correct, they raised their hands. If the teacher agreed, the student was deputized as a “teacher” to identify other student-parent pairs with the correct answer.

Then the teacher called, “Teachers, teach!” The deputized teachers used questioning techniques to help others solve the problem, such as, “Tell me what you tried so far.” or “How could you use \_\_\_\_ (insert strategy that works)?”

Parents enjoyed seeing their children take charge of math teaching and math learning. Several parents left encouraging notes for their children. One note stated clearly, “Súper orgullosa de que eres mi hija” (Super proud that you

are my daughter). Teachers were pleased with this first test of Students Teaching Parents. One explained, “These were some of the best interactions I have had with parents.” Students whose parents could not attend were given a TIPS interactive homework activity on the same skills as used in class.

**Show What You Know.** At Lincoln, about 30% of students are Hispanic, and over 60% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Teachers view all students as active learners. The students at all grade levels were prepared to showcase and share a grade-specific unit and their own projects with a parent.

Kindergarteners showcased a writing project; 1st graders showcased what they learned about flowers; 2nd graders showed their knowledge of bees; 3rd graders featured an ongoing plant project; 4th graders showcased studies of their heritage; and 5th graders showed off their science experiments.

The open-house-style display enabled students to guide their parents to their own work and focus on the ins and outs of their projects. Teachers interacted with parents on each student’s work and on the accomplishments of the class. In this way, each student was “explainer in chief” on his/her own work, and guide for parents on all other students’ projects on the unit. Because the students explained their projects in their parents’ home language, Show What You Know helped break down language barriers at the school.

A kindergartener was feeling the joy of teaching, noting, “I like being the one to tell my mom what I do here.” A fifth grader saw the big picture, “I love being able to show off all of our science experiments to the whole school and my family!”

*Erin Patterson*  
ATP Co-Chair (Eastgate) / 4th Grade Teacher  
[erin.patterson@ksd.org](mailto:erin.patterson@ksd.org)

*Lindsey Davis & Sara Morgan*  
LAP Specialist & Kindergarten Teacher (Lincoln)  
[lindsey.davis@ksd.org](mailto:lindsey.davis@ksd.org) & [sara.morgan@ksd.org](mailto:sara.morgan@ksd.org)

## BUILDING WITH RECYCLABLES

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ST. IGNATIUS EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM  
CLEVELAND, OH

**I**t is amazing what young children can do if we just listen to them and ask their opinions. The idea for Building with Recyclables started with the St. Ignatius Early Learning Program's Creative Curriculum, but grew as a result of students' voices. The preschool's comprehensive, research-based Creative Curriculum features exploration and discovery as a way of learning. Children are guided to develop confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills. The content and activities are designed to help educators plan and implement a developmentally-appropriate, content-rich program for children with diverse backgrounds and skill levels.

To begin teachers sent a letter home to families asking them to bring their recyclable materials to the school. They dropped the donated materials in a labeled bin. Teachers discussed the materials in each bin with students and shared information about recycling. This was the topic of class lessons on an important real-world topic.

Three weeks into the topic of recycling, a few children wanted to use the empty milk jugs to build a bridge. That simple request sparked a family engagement event. Teachers created a "web" for the children to think about all the different materials that would be needed to build a bridge. They thought about other things they built at school, and added their ideas about materials they wanted to build a bridge. As they brainstormed their ideas for a bridge, some students considered other objects that they wanted to build. The web of ideas grew for a few days. Teachers enlisted the help of the parents to collect more recyclables to enable the children to build the items they imagined.

Parents, children, and staff collected plastic bottles of all sizes, boxes (cereal, tissue), paper cups, plastic forks, spoons, and knives, milk jugs, different sizes and colors of tape, string, and glue. Large boxes were labeled to hold all of the recycled items. The main challenge was finding enough storage space for all of the items collected.

The teachers invited families to come to class to work with their children on creating the objects they wanted to make. Moms, dads, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and others were on hand to help students build rockets, castles, robots, and bridges. About 20 family members participated in the classroom building activity.

Children learned as they built their selected structures. They showed pride in the "alabaster" castles made of pure white Styrofoam cups. They sent cars through their paper tunnels. They stood and walked under a high-enough archway. Parents learned, too. They reported being happy and excited about the project, which one called "educational." They also noted ways to reduce waste and organize recycling at home. The low-cost, high-interest building activity cost \$25, with support from the Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program.

Students and families observed how, with a little creativity, items that would be sent off for recycling could be repurposed, reused, and "really cool." The Creative Curriculum gave the children a foundation of information on recycling. The creativity of children, parents, and teachers took knowledge and understanding to the next level—from trash to treasured creations.

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*Felicia McElrath*  
Site Administrator  
[fmcelrath@ccdoble.org](mailto:fmcelrath@ccdoble.org)

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## FAMILY STEM NIGHT

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JESSIE ROUSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
SAGINAW, MI

**T**he Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Jessie Rouse Elementary designed Family STEM Night by following steps for good planning: brainstorm, select, develop, implement, evaluate, revise, and improve. This is an important cycle of inquiry for school improvement.

The team consulted data from a previous year and agreed that the school's science night could be improved to increase attendance and understanding by parents and students. The planners checked with parents at a parent advisory council (PAC) meeting. Parents requested information about the meaning of STEM, and how that differs from thinking separately about science and math. They also recommended a more interactive science night. Teachers wanted to increase students' curiosity about STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and interest in STEM activities.

The team and school leaders contacted local partners (i.e., state university, Arts and Sciences Academy, United Way, and Office Central) to see if they would participate in the new and improved Family STEM Night. Each partner contributed station leaders and materials. The outreach to partners resulted in an exciting plan for interactive experiences, including experiments with a plasma ball, connecting circuits, making slime, engineering activities, and other hands-on activities.

In addition, other volunteers helped. The school lunch hostess cooked hot dogs for dinner. Parents and staff volunteered to serve the meal at Family STEM Night, and helped with clean up.

The ATP and others promoted the activity in the school's monthly newsletter, on the school marquee, and via the messaging system to all parents. They sent home an informational letter to parents with a request to RSVP and an incentive for those who responded to

enter their names in a drawing for \$10 vouchers for purchasing a science experiment or game. The school planned 25 vouchers—enough for parents to feel that they had a good chance of winning. The Title I staff made personal phone calls to all families that sent back an RSVP to remind and encourage them to attend the event. Lottery winners were called at various times throughout the evening.

In addition to advertising, the ATP, teachers, and leaders removed other obstacles to attendance. For example, a teacher volunteered to supervise after-school activities for students between 3:30-4:00 p.m., when Family STEM Night started. That way, parents could meet their child at school, instead of having students go home first. That helped parents who were at work go directly to the school for the start of Family STEM Night.

Families filled out an exit survey on why they came, what they learned, and other reactions and suggestions. One community partner commented that it really was great to “work with parents, students, and Jessie Rouse staff at the well-organized event.” Parents and students were enthusiastic. One parent liked “all the different stations and games,” and another liked that “the kids could learn about various experiments and that her family won one of the \$10 vouchers to buy a science game.” Family STEM Night was of interest to over 125 attendees who learned more about STEM subjects. It was an improvement over the previous year's design because the leaders went about their plans and improvements with input from parents. They turned parents' suggestions into effective plans, partners, and practices.

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*Laura Green*  
Title I - ELA  
[lgreen@spsd.net](mailto:lgreen@spsd.net)

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## OCHOA FAMILY STEAM NIGHT

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OCHOA MIDDLE SCHOOL  
PASCO, WA

All schools in the Pasco School District emphasize students' learning in STEAM subjects (science, technology, engineering, art, and math). Ochoa Middle School serves over 90% Hispanic students in grades 7 and 8. The teachers are clear about the classes they teach and the standards that students must reach. They realized that they were conducting activities in class that parents would enjoy seeing and doing with their students.

Parents on the Action Team for Partnership (ATP) asked teachers to submit ideas for activities for each grade level linked to district and state standards that they thought would be appropriate for Ochoa Family STEAM Night. The principal, who is on the ATP, gave final approval for all activities and related costs. The activities (from Project Lead the Way and other programs) had been tested in class so that teachers knew they were well designed for student learning.

At STEAM Night, students and their parents followed signs in the cafeteria to find specific activities. A teacher-leader was at each station along with written directions to guide students and parents through each activity. Students and families traveled from station to station, selecting the activities in that interested them. Many activities involved a friendly competition of student and parent on a STEAM project. For example, one activity guided students and parents to create boats from one Dixie cup, two straws, scissors, and one foot of masking tape. The sailor-engineers simultaneously added one penny at a time to the boats they designed until one of the boats sank. Then, more pennies were added to the remaining floater because everyone wanted to know how much a hand-crafted boat could hold before it sank.

Families chose from 12 activities for about 90 minutes. The fun was recorded to review at home as parents' took out their cell phones to take pictures of the activities and competitions. One mother and daughter team attracted a crowd as they worked to see which one could build the highest free-standing pipe cleaner tower. Said one parent proudly, "My daughter is more creative than I am!"

Students benefitted by increasing their awareness of the importance of STEAM subjects for building skills that could apply to real-world tasks and every day problem-solving situations. Many students reported that they had to take a few minutes to think about how to approach the challenge at each station, communicate with a partner if they were working together, and persevere when things did not go as planned. Thinking, communicating, and persevering skills are critical in many settings—STEAM and otherwise.

Periodically, during STEAM night, raffle prize winners were announced, creating some extra excitement. The students approved. One seventh grader said, "I can't wait to do this again next year."

The school's marketing included the now-common options of flyers, robo calls, and many announcements and reminders. The ATP and teachers selected an important message for parents: Ochoa Family: You're Another Reason Why It's Cool to be Us! STEAM Night planners displayed one set of materials on a cart that they rolled around to each classroom to show students what they would do in competition with a parent at STEAM Night. This may have been the most powerful advertising because students could see that the activities were fun and challenging.

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*Linda Williams*  
ATP Co-Chair  
[lwilliams@psd1.org](mailto:lwilliams@psd1.org)

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## STEAM NIGHT

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HORACE MANN ARTS AND SCIENCES MAGNET MIDDLE SCHOOL  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

**A**t Horace Mann Arts and Sciences Magnet Middle School, teachers are working to reinforce students' learning of the connections across subjects. About 800 students from all parts of the city attend Mann in grades 6 to 8, and over 70% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. They may elect to focus on the arts or sciences. Those specializing in science have a full curriculum of English, science, mathematics, and social studies, and take a full year of laboratory science class. The program emphasizes student-led research projects. Students in the arts take the same full curriculum and elect to specialize in the visual arts, drama, dance or music (including band, orchestra, piano or choral music).

It was natural for the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and Mann's teachers to redesign a former family STEM night to a STEAM night—Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. In that way, the arts and sciences could be creatively connected.

Some activities at STEAM Night focused distinctly on science or distinctly on the arts. Other activities cleverly combined the two subjects. The science and art teachers worked together to integrate the two subjects in ways that would increase students' learning, parents' awareness of the school's curriculum, and some good fun.

A hot dog dinner was served, prepared and served with help from the Parent, Teacher, Student Association. Then, students and parents traveled to many stations to conduct and discuss activities in engineering, biology, earth science, anatomy, and physics. Teachers also invited several community partners who featured science-related businesses and services.

The arts teachers organized performances and art displays with their classes. Some students performed live, including (in turn) the

choir, orchestra, band, piano, dance, and theater classes. Others in the visual arts displayed their work throughout the school hallways. Times and locations for each performance were posted in multiple locations and announcements alerted attendees to each performance.

Teachers of all subjects set up informational and make-and-take booths throughout the school that featured interdisciplinary connections in their subjects. For example, an English teacher and students displayed students' projects that integrated writing, research, and the art of mask making. Students and families could make a mask at that booth. A robotics teacher and several students demonstrated how a robot they built could pick up cones and deliver them somewhere else. A science teacher shared a hands-on booth of the bones of wild animals, along with photos of the animal species.

To advertise STEAM Night the school used established strategies of flyers, information on the school website, and phone messages to all parents. Students in art classes created the flyers that all students took home. Funds came from the science and the art departments, and from the Title I budget for parent and family engagement. The event was well attended by over 400 parents, about 800 students, and 125 teachers and community partners.

The school is proud of its unique programs for students and its partnerships with families and the community. These programs promote the interests and talents of each student at the school, which increases motivation to learn. Together, teachers across departments will continue to develop ways for students to see the interdisciplinary connections across the curriculum.

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*Jordan Wolf*  
Parent Facilitator  
[Jordan.wolf@lrdsd.org](mailto:Jordan.wolf@lrdsd.org)

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## STEAM FAMILY NIGHT

TREMONT MONTESSORI  
CLEVELAND, OH

**F**or more than a decade, the Tremont neighborhood in Cleveland has held a monthly community art walk, now called Walkabout Tremont. Art galleries and restaurants in the neighborhood open their doors in the evening to celebrate art, music, and local food specialties. Tremont Montessori (a PreK program that is part of a public PreK-8 public elementary school) has participated over the years by displaying students' artwork completed during that school year. Last year, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and leaders expanded and improved the school's contribution to Walkabout Tremont in May with STEAM Family Night.

Community members were welcome to come to see many things that students worked on in STEAM subjects (i.e., science, technology, engineering, art, and math) and related topics. The main feature was the art gallery. As in years past, students' work from the entire year—one project from each child—was on display. Some art projects incorporated principles of math and science, linking students' artwork with other STEAM subjects.

Last year, some artwork also was linked to science and social studies that students studied on the Lunar New Year. Celebrated in many Asian countries, the Lunar New Year (LNY) marks the "real" or celebratory start of each new year, based on the moon's rotation around the earth. Tremont Montessori students explored the astronomy, customs, food, and art linked to LNY. Their studies inspired some LNY-inspired artwork on display at STEAM Family Night.

All artwork was mounted and displayed in ways that transformed the school into an art gallery. Keyboard players provided soft background music for a gallery atmosphere. Attendees also saw and experienced the following:

- Music concerts. The whole-school band and new string section gave concerts at points in the evening. Music skills (reading music, identi-

fying rhythms) are closely linked to math and other student learning.

- Science fair project display. All of the year's projects were on proud display.

- Book give away. The school used some of its Title I funds to purchase books so that every child in attendance could take home a free book of fiction or non-fiction. Many were linked to STEAM subjects. Other books were available for purchase.

- Pre-K enrollment. Because many new members of the community attended this Walkabout Tremont, the preschool had an information booth about the school's pre-kindergarten program. Parents could enroll their children there or take the forms home to complete.

- Information booths on community resources. Several community partners (library, health services, & art museum) had booths with information for parents and children.

- Other attractions. The science teacher demonstrated and led activities using a 3-D printer—a new addition for STEAM technologies. The PE teacher brought in community volunteers to offer free bicycle repair services—bringing technology and engineering to bear on real-world challenges. There also was a storyteller to entertain for a portion of the evening, and refreshments were served.

One teacher summed up the views of many others, "This is my favorite night for the families. They get to see all of the children's hard work and accomplishments."

Tremont Montessori estimates that about 1,200 community members came through STEAM Family Night, plus 600 students and over 60 educators and community partners. The activity helped Tremont Montessori stay visible in the community and strengthened school, family, and community partnerships.

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*Susan Conrad / Mary McDonnell-Krupa*  
Teacher / Pre-K  
*dougnsus@roadrunner.com*

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TYPE 2

SCIENCE

## STREAM NIGHT

CASTLIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
ST. CHARLES, MO

**W**hat happens when two successful family engagement events are combined? Castlio Elementary combined Seuss and STEM and Fine Arts Night—and produced a comprehensive, lollapalooza of an event focused on Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, and Math: STREAM. In Education Land, STEM morphed to STEAM, and now, with Castlio creativity, STEAM morphed to STREAM. Castlio conducts a curriculum-linked family night to strengthen the school’s partnership climate for all students and families.

STREAM Night was quite an undertaking, so the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), committee members who organized the previous activities, and many teachers got together to prepare and implement the new combined event. All partners helped on the evening of STREAM Night to set up tables and activities in two gyms, the cafeteria, learning commons area, and hallways.

Over 30 activities were placed throughout the school, including robotic demonstrations, a marble run, a graphic design demonstration by a shirt company, recycle art, origami, 3D printing demonstrations, spin art, pottery wheel demonstrations, engineering challenges, coding, and the St. Louis Science Center. Students used their skills from STREAM subjects in many of the hands-on activities, and learned some new things. For example, the demonstration of the 3-D printer introduced a new technology and the demonstration of a potter’s wheel opened this art to many students.

Some parents of students were employed by participating community partners. One parent who worked for an agricultural company set up a table and helped students make seed necklaces. Another parent group used fruit and electro transmitters to transmit musical notes. Parents were a great source of information and assistance for STREAM Night. A new feature this year was a local author for students to meet and

discuss her book, *Popularity Pizzazz*, an anti-bullying/pro-friendship story.

Attendees purchased refreshments from a local dessert company or shaved ice business. Everyone received a new Castlio Elementary School tote bag to carry the handouts and takeaways from the various activities. The bags were distributed by Castlio’s student council. These students also greeted attendees and provided maps for locating all of the activities. One student identified his favorite stops, “I loved meeting the author and creating a marshmallow tower!”

Nearly 600 students and parents attended STREAM Night. This was the result of an easy-to-use digital link for parents to RSVP to invitations. Advertisements on Twitter, Facebook, and the school’s E-News all included links for parents to RSVP. Flyers included a Quick Response (QR) code that for parents could scan to RSVP. RSVPs were tracked by *SignUpGenius*, which provides a free tracking service to schools to monitor attendees to events. With this technology, Castlio’s ATP was able to know how many families were planning to attend.

One teacher reported, “It was a lot of work to plan STREAM Night,” and added “but watching eager students and families come in made the planning worthwhile.” The ATP made most of the phone calls, wrote most of the e-mails, and planned most of the logistics. Administrators supported the entire event and helped on many aspects of implementation. Many hands were needed to make light work of this comprehensive engagement activity.

STREAM Night cost only \$250, supported by school funds and the PTO. The community partners and participants provided in kind support and enabled an amazing night that had something of interest for everyone.

*Tim Scholle*

*Principal*

*[timothy.scholle@fhsdschools.org](mailto:timothy.scholle@fhsdschools.org)*

## CANDY LAND FAMILY NIGHT

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MARK TWAIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
PASCO, WA

**M**ark Twain Elementary School was transformed into a giant *Candy Land* game with hundreds of colorful butcher paper squares, taped together on the floor to recreate the winding path in the popular children's game. Beginning in the gym and leading to the cafeteria, the colorful path took Twain's students and their parents past a dozen different booths focusing on reading, science, or math—and sometimes all three.

Activities for students matched grade level standards from kindergarten to sixth grade. Grade level teams of teachers met and designed or selected three activities each that would help students practice school skills, based on the *Candy Land* theme. The activities included racing bears, roll a sight word, floating M&Ms, bubble gum bump, bubble gum investigation, candy sight words, making 3-D shapes, mad libs, water cycle, skittles and solvents, M&M fractions, antonym and synonym challenge, build a windmill STEM challenge, jellybean division, sink the marshmallow, Skittles castle ratios, licorice hurricanes, lollipop words, and marshmallow volume. These activities required a lot of candy! School sure is sweet!

One parent commented on the theme: "Whoever named a STEM night as Candy Land is brilliant. This is a great marketing draw to get kids into cool thinking as a family." Clearly, many agreed because 200 students and 100 parents attended. The electronic exit survey indicated that 100% of the respondents said they would come back for the same activity in the future. The Action Team for Partnerships, teachers, and others sent home flyers, used the school's website, monthly calendar, and reader

board outside the building, an online parent-teacher communication app named *Bloomz*, and reminded students on the school's foyer television.

The principal observed, "We had students and parents talking about learning at the stations, sharing excitement over science discoveries, and laughing at their MadLibs creations." All activities were geared for students to have fun while learning, and for parents to observe teaching strategies that they could use to play the games at home.

Families agreed that it was fun to do the activities together. One student said, "This was so much fun, and I liked learning with my dad!" The school also paid special attention to the needs of the varying students' families by assuring staff representation across the grade levels and providing all written materials in English and Spanish. A map of Candy Land in English and Spanish allowed students and parents to navigate curvy Candy Land Road effectively, and spend time at the tables with the most helpful age- and grade-relevant activities.

The evening included four donated prize baskets that were raffled off to students in attendance. Other materials—including candy for many games—were donated by businesses in the community. Parents volunteered to help decorate and create crafts. The public library set up an informational station for families to learn about its services offered and apply for a library card. One parent noticed these contributions and commented, "Great night. Appreciate the extra effort staff and volunteers gave to make this a fun and educational night for our kids."

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Tyler Thompson  
ATP Chairman  
[tthompson@psd1.org](mailto:tthompson@psd1.org)

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## FAMILY EXPO AND MUSEUM EXPLORATION

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MERRICK HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER  
CLEVELAND, OH

**E**arly Learning Development Standards (ELDS) in Ohio guide early childhood education throughout the state. Pre-kindergarten teachers use the standards to design activities for their students, but not all parents are aware of how the standards affect student learning or how to follow up with standards-based activities at home.

Merrick House Neighborhood Center held a Family Expo for parents and their children on the major clusters (domains) of state standards for preschool education. The school also conducted a field trip to a local museum to help families reinforce their children's learning on key developmental standards.

At the Family Expo, the Action Team for Partnership (ATP) and teachers set up a booth for each ELDS domain—i.e., social-emotional development; approaches to learning; cognitive development and general knowledge; language and literacy development; and physical well-being and motor development. At each booth, teachers explained the domain and conducted related activities with the children and parents.

The EXPO aimed to help the school strengthen its Type 4-Learning at Home activities. The activities at each booth showed parents some activities that their children were learning in school. They gathered ideas about how to reinforce the standards with activities at home. Each family was given take-home activities in each domain to enjoy doing with their infants, toddlers, or pre-kindergarteners. A few activity kits about language and literacy were raffled off, along with some shopping gift cards.

The Family Expo included booths for community partners to share information on their services. One was an interactive snack station with ideas for healthy snacks that could be prepared easily by busy parents. A story time booth included a rhythm section for children and parents to try some call-and-response stories.

One parent commented, "I love that the teachers were the presenters who conducted the activities." After the EXPO, teachers reported that parents were more willing to ask them questions about the curriculum and how to follow up at home.

Not all parents were able to come to the EXPO, which was conducted with students during the day. Those who could not attend received the information and materials that were provided to parents at the EXPO. They also were invited to meet the ATP and teachers on an evening field trip.

The director rented a bus for members of the ATP, students, and parents to go on a field trip to the planetarium and national history museum. At the planetarium, students and parents enjoyed Big Bird and Elmo's presentation on the night sky. At the museum's Discovery Center, they excavated dinosaur bones, created a fossil print, and touched a variety of animal furs. They heard bird songs and examined tarantulas and frogs. Back at school, parent and children had subs or wraps for dinner.

The Night at the Museum evening trip helped teachers talk with parents in a relaxed setting, and enabled families to meet each other. The sky show and activities for parents and children were linked to all of the ELDS domains.

The EXPO and Night at the Museum were organized by the ATP. Members shared leadership roles to arrange schedules, advertise, and conducting all implementation tasks. The ATP reported that their most important "learning" was that teamwork is imperative for successful activities for family and community engagement.

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*Michelle Curry*  
Chief Executive Director  
[michellec@merrickhouse.org](mailto:michellec@merrickhouse.org)

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## MOM'S SIP AND ART EVENT

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LOUIS STOKES HEAD START CENTER  
CLEVELAND, OH

**T**he Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Louis Stokes Head Start Center planned to help moms foster their child's creativity with art activities related to what they see and experience outdoors in the fall. Teachers attended a workshop on exploring nature entitled Using Your Outdoor Classroom, which included this guideline: "Children need to learn to love the earth in order to save it!"

The Action Team for Partnership (ATP) surveyed parents and learned that art was one area of interest to moms. The Stokes Head Start teachers believed that moms would discover the joys of being surrounded by nature if they conducted low-cost art activities at school that they could also conduct with their young children at home.

At an ATP meeting, one member of the team described her experiences at a Sip and Paint activity. It sounded so interesting that the ATP added the activity to their One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships. The team adapted the idea to focus on the outdoors as the location for getting an inspiration for creating a work of art, and expanded the art media beyond paint.

The ATP worked together to ensure that Mom's Sip and Art Event was a success. Teachers researched and summarized literature indicating that children learned thinking skills and motor skills through the arts. They found several make-and-take activities that would extend an art project conducted at school with ideas that parents could conduct with their children at home. They gathered donations from the community to supplement materials at the school.

At Mom's Sip and Art Event, teachers started by asking a series of questions that moms

could ask their children. For example: What is happening in nature in the fall season? What do we see, hear, smell, and touch outside that tells us it is fall? The team also shared research on how children use art to tell a story of what is happening around them.

The moms rotated from station to station to gather information, observe nature, and make art. They looked at pictures displaying the beauty of the fall season, and they conducted several hands-on activities to enjoy the out-of-doors. These included making spider and bat hats, leaf stamping and pressing, designing paper plate owls, creating autumn wreaths and whirligigs, making pinecone animals, drawing or painting still life pictures, and popsicle stick puppets.

The moms relaxed, listened to music, sipped juice, and snacked on pumpkin and zucchini bread made from fresh-picked crops from the Stokes Head Start Center's garden. They explored, selected, and created an art project on the fall season. As they were leaving, moms received take home packets of ideas for low-cost, fun, outdoor art activities that they could conduct with their child at home.

One mom shared, "I think I found my new passion! I haven't had this much fun in a long time!" This low-cost engagement activity resulted in lots of smiles and complements as moms reviewed each other's projects. The Head Start Center hung the moms' artwork in the front lobby for teachers, staff, children, and visitors to see. Teachers were particularly taken by the moms' pride in showing their child the project they competed at Mom's Sip and Art Event.

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*Thelma Bizzell*  
Site Administrator  
[tbizzell@ceogc.org](mailto:tbizzell@ceogc.org)

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TYPE 4

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

## PARENT ENGAGEMENT AT NORTH VISTA

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NORTH VISTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
FLORENCE, SC

TYPE 4

**A**s the saying goes, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” North Vista Elementary School is a strong and determined school—quite “tough,”—working hard to increase parental engagement. The school serves mainly African American students, nearly all of whom are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Last year, the school hosted a well-advertised, four-night series of activities to improve family and community engagement, and to increase students’ academic and behavioral success in school.

The first activity was Fiesta Family Game Night, where about 65 families engaged in fun games such as *Candy Land*, *Operation*, *Memory*, *Uno*, *Headbandz*, and more. The games reinforced family time and conversation, and students’ motor skills, math skills, and thinking skills. Teachers led each station and played games with families and students. After the games, parents and students enjoyed making and eating walking tacos.

At the second activity, Math under the Big Top, a local high school drumline greeted families with a bang. Parents learned math strategies to use at home with their children. Parents selected two sessions linked to their student’s skills and needs. Some strategies were “casino themed,” with playing cards and chips for practicing math skills. Another session featured “math survival kits,” with common materials such as Styrofoam cups, milk cartons, and plates to practice place value, multiplication, and fractions. After the sessions, parents and students enjoyed carnival-themed snacks.

Third in the series was SOUPer STEAM Night. Parents and students participated in fun STEAM experiments and activities (i.e., science, technology, engineering, art, and math) led by North Vista teachers and the head of the chemistry department at a local university. Students and parents made slime, built a sink-proof boat, designed and created musical instruments, and

added fuel to a fire. Making slime was particularly popular and students shared slime made at home with other students. The evening concluded with soup and baked potatoes with all the trimmings. One student cried at the event, complaining, “Do we have to go? I didn’t see everything!”

Cloudy with a Focus on Literacy was the last in the series and occurred during Read across America Week. Parents and students engaged in interdisciplinary activities that included a focus on reading and read-alouds. The local university sponsored a few stations, such as making oobleck based on Dr. Seuss’s *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*. Students played Bingo for book giveaways. Spaghetti and meatballs were served after the event.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and other school leaders knew each event would require creative and inclusive advertising. It was important to provide dinner with each activity. Also, it was helpful that the local newspaper reported the events in the series. After each activity, students and parents took home ideas and materials to keep practicing and learning skills at home. The school was supported by a small grant from its good partner—Francis Marion University’s Center of Excellence. Over 100 parents, their children, and many teachers participated over the year.

The staff read research confirming that students are most successful when families are involved in their education and when families work together in partnership with the school. The hard work at North Vista paid off. Said the principal, “Our parenting programs this year have garnered the best turnout I have seen in years!”

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Myah Woods  
Math Coach  
mwoods@fsd1.org

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OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

## SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES SOIREE

KROTZ SPRINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
KROTZ SPRINGS, LA

A soiree is a fancy evening affair (from the French *soirée*). Krotz Springs Elementary School science and social studies teachers hosted their kind of soiree to encourage students to submit a project to the annual science and social studies fairs. This was a planning meeting for students and parents from grades 3 to 8 to learn about conducting successful research projects. The gathering took place two months in advance of the science and social studies fairs to give students enough time to develop and complete their projects.

First, students, parents, and teachers met in the gym to outline the purposes of the fairs and to browse a gallery of past projects for inspiration. Students, parents, and teachers in the “even grades” (4, 6, and 8) attended a breakout session for social studies where teachers described and discussed nine social studies categories for projects for the fair. These included history, economics, anthropology, archaeology, and other fields of interest. To introduce each category in a fun way, a student dressed up as a historical figure related to the category (e.g., Statue of Liberty, Amelia Earhart, Cleopatra, Louisiana Indian). The “mommarazzi” took many photos!

Students, parents, and teachers in the “odd grades” (3, 5, and 7) attended a breakout session for science, led by a retired science teacher. She discussed safety when conducting science projects and steps of the scientific method. Students conducted hands-on activities with various materials common in scientific experiments. The presenter modeled the various steps of a complete science fair project from asking a question, identifying materials, conducting an experiment or exploration, writing up results, and so on.

About 98 families received a project board. Light refreshments were served. Students

received a ticket for a free jeans day for attending the Soiree. Parents completed surveys, talked with teachers, and left the soiree with very motivated children.

Two months later when the social studies and science fairs were held, Krotz Springs had more entrants and entries of higher quality than in previous years. Several projects advanced to the district fair, a few advanced to the state fair, and one placed in the state competition.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and all teachers were pleased that the planning Soiree involved students and parents in thinking about a good project, and this led to many students participating in the fairs. Students had an opportunity to study a topic in a systematic, scientific way and build new skills. They activated their curiosity, creativity, and ingenuity in the projects they selected. The principal noted, “When we are able to inspire students through interactive educational means, they typically respond well and exceed our expectations.” Students conducted the projects. Parents’ role was to reinforce the project guidelines discussed by the teachers at the Soiree. As students planned and conducted their projects, they entered many good conversations with their parent guides at home.

The Soiree was planned and organized by the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), and the science and social studies teachers. Parents were alerted to the Soiree via the school’s apps, website, and social media, the Krotz Springs Town newsletter, weekly flyers, and in the daily general assembly announcements. A parent noticed the hard work and commented, “Well planned and very informative!”

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Reagan Aymond  
Parental Involvement Coordinator /  
1st Grade Teacher  
Rda1043@slp.k12.la.us

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## STUDENT GOAL SHARING NIGHT

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VIRGIE ROBINSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
PASCO, WA

TYPE 2

OTHER/MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

A goal is a powerful motivator. With this in mind, Virgie Robinson Elementary took time for the school as whole, teachers, and students to set goals for success. The school serves 800 students (K-6), of whom over 90% are Hispanic, 78% are transitional bilingual students, and 100% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), teachers, and school leaders knew that deliberate goal-setting, monitoring, and sharing progress reports could be helpful to all students. Metacognition research and school improvement studies confirm that students learn more when they are cognizant and thoughtful about what they are learning, and when they know they are “in charge” of their successes.

At the beginning of the school year, teachers provided all students with guidelines for goal setting in reading, math, behavior, and attendance. Each student received a folder to record their goals on these outcomes. They, then, created graphs of class tests and other indicators to document progress over the school year.

Twice a year (October and February), parents and students gathered for student-led conferences on their goals, progress, and to discuss new goals for the next semester. Teachers were on hand to answer questions and talk with parents, but the emphasis was on enabling students to lead the discussions about their own learning.

Parents were invited to Student Goal Sharing Night a month in advance. The classroom from each grade level with the highest percentage of parents attending earned a pizza party. In addition, others won prizes that were raffled off, and students could enter a candy-estimation game and a bike raffle when they completed

conducting their conference. The prizes were on display at school to remind students to come with their parents to review their goals and progress.

The student-led conferences increased parent engagement in their children’s education, and boosted parents’ pride in their child’s ability to conduct a discussion about their own goals and progress. Students learned that they are responsible for their own learning. Students could see that their teachers believed that setting goals was a good idea because each teacher set classroom-level goals and created a “data wall” to chart the aggregate progress of all students in the class. Also, school-wide goals were graphed and reported on charts in the halls. Teachers reported that they saw encouraging gains on end-of-year achievement tests. These patterns will be monitored with quantitative data as students continue to work to attain their goals. Virgie Robinson’s students are learning that setting goals is step 1; reaching goals is step 2; and setting new goals for continuous progress is step 3.

In addition to advertising through flyers, daily announcements on the intercom, and in the district newsletter, the ATP scheduled Student Goal Setting Night at the same time as a book fair in the school library and STEM activities in the gym. About 400 parents attended the student-led conferences. The school is aiming for more participation by emphasizing the importance of the student’s role in conducting the discussion with parents. The school leaders want all student to say to their parents, “This is something we don’t want to miss.”

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*Jorge Trigo / Blanca Sabalza*  
*Behavior Intervention Specialist / Coach*  
*[jtrigo@psd1.org](mailto:jtrigo@psd1.org)*

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# 2

## NON-ACADEMIC GOALS



Practices for Types 1-6 in this section involve families and community partners to help students meet non-academic goals for positive behavior, post-secondary education and career planning, health and safety, multicultural awareness, and successful transitions.



## 5K—SHARPEN THE SAW FAMILY DAY

ZILWAUKEE SCHOOL  
SAGINAW, MI

**Z**ilwaukee School hosted a 5-K race and Sharpen the Saw Day—a family and community activity. As a Leader in Me School, the school holds that every student is a leader in learning and life. Students (Pre-K to grade 8) are guided to develop habits of good work, continuous progress in learning, and leadership skills derived from the late Dr. Stephen Covey’s book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Zilwaukee School incorporated the habits (e.g., put first things first; think win/win; seek to understand and then to be understood) into its own mission for all students to LEAD—Live the 7 habits of success, Exceed expectations, Accept responsibility for academics and actions, and Do the right thing even when no one is watching. The schools’ mission supports students in developing their social, emotional, and academic skills.

In his book, Covey noted, “Sharpen the Saw means preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have – you.” Of course, students are the main actors in their own education. Zilwaukee’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and school leaders believe that families are an essential asset to help students achieve in school and succeed in life. To assist families with information and resources for summer fun and learning, Zilwaukee conducted Sharpen the Saw Day and 5K race in June as a culminating partnership activity for the year, and as a way to help families and students prepare for a healthy and productive summer.

Parents and students selected workshops and activities that interested them to improve academic skills, safety, wellness, and family relationships. There were various make it/take it activities and recipes for summer snacks. More than 30 community organizations participated. Some gave away books to students; information on local summer camps; and free passes to the local zoo, museums, and fitness centers.

Among many partners were the Zilwaukee City fire, police, and parks and recreation departments; READ Association; Jewels the Clown; Boys & Girls Club; Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts; and school district coaches for literacy, math and STEM activities.

The day kicked off with an opening flag ceremony led by the Boy Scouts and singing of the national anthem led by the older grades’ choir. Then, students and families participated in a 5K walk/run, other competitions, and interactive activities aligned with the school’s mission. One parent reported, “As a family, we enjoyed the friendly competition of the inflatable race, as well as the class tug-o-war competitions.”

Community partners donated backpacks for students and prizes for families to win. Title I Parent Engagement Funds, school funds, and a Healthy Eating Plan Grant paid for two magic shows, a fruit station following the 5K, items for make it/take it stations, and lunch for vendors and parents.

This event brought over 500 students, parents, teachers, and community partners together for an enjoyable and productive day that supported family and community engagement in support of the school’s mission. One parent shared, “The Zilwaukee 5K...Sharpen the Saw Family Day exceeded my expectations! This day with my family is definitely one that we will continue to talk about. I appreciate the time spent to put this together.” This well-planned and well-implemented activity met its goals to celebrate school, family, and community partnerships at the end of the school year and reinforce the importance of partnerships for the future.

*Tina Munoz*  
Principal  
[tmunoz@spsd.net](mailto:tmunoz@spsd.net)

TYPE 6

BEHAVIOR



## KINDNESS WEEK

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WHITE BLUFFS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
RICHLAND, WA

**K**indness Week is a nationally recognized activity held every February. It is a fact that, these days, students see and hear a lot of rough stuff happening. At White Bluffs Elementary, Kindness Week attempts to balance the rough and tough with a daily challenge to conduct an act of kindness. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and the school's Kindness Club (started by a student and facilitated by an instructional specialist and a paraprofessional at the school) took Kindness Week to a whole new level.

This year, parents were invited to participate in the daily Random Acts of Kindness (R.A.K) challenges. Each day a new challenge was issued and publicized by the Kindness Club to students and to parents. Students made posters and created podcasts starring the students that were played in classrooms. Members of the Kindness Club greeted students each day as they entered the building. They created kindness rocks that were hidden and then discovered by students on Clean Up the School Day. Members of the Kindness Club made morning announcements and generated ideas for each day's kindness challenge.

Many other hands also made this a successful week. The art teacher worked with Kindness Club students using the WeVideo program to polish their podcasts. The school counselor designed the flyer that went home to parents and the PowerPoint that ran on school monitors during the week. Two local news stations visited the school and reported stories of Kindness Week. Teachers promoted the challenges, communicated with parents, and played and discussed the daily podcast. Administrators had a tasty idea to give Krispy Kreme Kindness donuts one day to parents who dropped off their kids.

One Kindness Club member reported, "This brings our school closer together and it makes everyone happy." Monday started the week with Smile Day. The goal was to smile at as many people as possible—for real. Tuesday was Thankful Day to help everyone focus on things in their lives that made them thankful. Wednesday was Clean the School Day and Thursday was Compliment Day. The week ended on Friday with Meet Someone New Day. Students were encouraged to make a new friend, talk to someone new, or sit next to someone new at lunch. A smile, thank you, sincere compliment, and new friend can really brighten someone's day.

Although formal data were not collected, teachers and staff observed that students were excited to participate in the challenges. Some teachers incorporated Kindness Week efforts into their writing prompts and conducted discussions about kindness in class and during recess. The week happened to take place the same week as tragic shootings in Florida—a continent away. The sad coincidence reinforced the need for schools—everywhere—to take action to continually improve the school climate and connections with the wider community. As a result of the publicity on TV, White Bluff's ATP was contacted by a school district in a neighboring state for information on how to implement Kindness Week and the Kindness Club.

Each challenge helped many students and parents make the school a better place. A club member summed things up, "If someone smiles at someone or gives a compliment, two people feel better." Her mother added, "We want students to know that, despite many bad goings on in the world, it's nice to be nice."

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*Nathan Simmons*  
School Counselor  
*Nathan.simmons@rsd.edu*

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## PARENTING THE STRONG-WILLED CHILD

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FOREST HEIGHTS STEM ACADEMY  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

**G**ood data help educators understand students and parents. At Forest Heights STEM Academy, data gathered through a survey of parents at the start of the school year alerted the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers to parents' requests to learn more about how to manage difficult student behavior. Parenting is one of the most challenging "jobs" there is. It is a labor of love, but getting support and guidance on positive discipline can make parent-child connections even more lovable.

Forest Heights is an urban K-8 school serving students from 5 to 13 years old who have a wide range of needs. More than 60% of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch. As a partnership school, Forest Heights knows that working with parents and addressing their questions is good for students and improves trust and collaborations between parents and teachers. Good communications with parents help to continually improve the quality of the school's partnership program.

On the survey, many parents stated that they wanted help with age-appropriate discipline. The district provided an expert on student behavior management to gather materials, present information, provide resources, and discuss parents' questions and concerns. Tough topics were addressed in an engaging and direct way including autistic behavior, parenting strong-willed children, behavior management, parental coping strategies, and creating behavior plans at home. Some parents stayed on for personal consultations after the meeting. Said one parent, "This was just what I needed!"

The key to this promising practice was to have a knowledgeable speaker who could connect with all parents who had students across grade levels and with different demographic backgrounds.

The speaker at Parenting the Strong-Willed Child drew from research and from personal experiences and provided great pictures, useful charts and checklists, and practical ideas. Her manner put attendees at ease and the conversation included everyone. Parents were given handouts, a notes page, and a ticket for door prizes. They completed a reflection before leaving to help the school evaluate and improve the workshop.

This was a "proactive," preventative partnership practice that responded to requests from parents. It was not a response to a dramatic or traumatic event at school. The survey gave parents an opportunity to ask their personal questions on a survey. Although it is difficult to conduct topical workshops at the start of a school year, the ATP still had time to advertise by phone, e-mail, flyer, and Facebook in advance of the event.

The workshop also helped the school faculty and staff with valuable notes, tips, and behavior management "tricks." Many teachers have mastered effective behavior management techniques, but good teachers are always working to improve their craft. Because of this session, many students found that their parents (and some teachers) were more patient, less frustrated, and better equipped to help them learn to regulate their behavior in appropriate ways. This should support the school's goals for fewer office referrals and more student success in school.

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*Jennifer Thomas*  
Parent Engagement Facilitator  
*Jennifer.Thomas@lrsl.org*

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TYPE 1

BEHAVIOR

## PBIS PARTY

EMERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
PASCO, WA

Students—like all of us—tend to respond well to predictable, consistent rules for good behavior and clear consequences for behaving badly. For three years, Emerson Elementary School has been implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)—a popular, research-based approach to improve student behavior and school climate. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATPs) and school leaders realized that more students might improve their behavior if their parents knew what PBIS is, how it is implemented at school, and how they might reinforce the schools’ messages to students or use similar strategies at home.

Emerson serves over 90% Hispanic students and over 85% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. These children, like students everywhere, are especially responsive to teachers’ disciplinary actions that are based on reasoning and positive expectations for student success, rather than automatic harsh punishment. Programs like PBIS aim to help all student self-regulate their behavior and understand how good behavior affects peer relationships and learning.

The ATP and Emerson’s teachers invited parents to an early morning meeting—PBIS Party—to explain the program, rules for student behavior, and how families can be engaged in ways that support student success. Over 50 parents attended to learn about the program. One teacher reflected, “I’m glad so many parents were interested in this and came to learn what we are doing here at Emerson to ensure good student behavior and successful learning.”

After breakfast, parents were welcomed and asked what they know, presently, about PBIS. Then, speakers from the district office provided an overview, including the theory of positive support and a summary of research findings. The goal was not to tell parents how to discipline their children. Rather, teachers wanted parents to know how all teachers across

the grades were working together to ensure that students behaved well in school so that they and their classmates could learn. Said one parent, “Showing us the research behind why (PBIS) works made me want to try this with my own kids!”

The slide show explained how “tiers” of PBIS are implemented. The “universal tier” guides all students on basic rules. Then, targeted tiers give extra help to students who need attention for incorrect behavior. Parents participated in several hands-on activities to see how PBIS strategies are applied in school. Parents also asked questions about how to apply PBIS approaches at home. They were given resources to take home, and a school contact for additional questions.

Parents’ exit surveys in Spanish and English indicated that they appreciated the information they received. They reported that they felt more comfortable after the PBIS Party than before about contacting a teacher if they had questions about student behavior or wanted advice about the program.

It is, of course, up to each parent whether or not they talk with their child about school behavior or apply PBIS actions at home. However, many parents said they were eager for ideas about effective ways to encourage children’s good behavior at home and in other settings. Many also agreed that it would help their children to know that their teachers and parents are on the same page about expecting good behavior and good citizenship at school. Teachers, parents, and the students, themselves, know that if all students behave well in class, then all students are happier in school and more likely to reach important learning goals.

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Stacy Artz  
Behavior Intervention Specialist  
sartz@psd1.org

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## POSITIVE PARENTING WORKSHOPS

BALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

**T**eachers and staff at Bale Elementary School received training from Parenting Partners to conduct workshops on parenting leadership and skills for positive interactions with their children at home and to support their children as students for success in school. In NNPS terms, the workshops aimed to strengthen Type1-Parenting to improve family relationships and school and family partnerships.

Bale Elementary teachers combined several topics into two focused workshops and invited parents to attend. Flyers were sent home with an R.S.V.P. for parents to respond. The workshops offered extra services including childcare, translators, dinner, and door prizes. Bale students volunteered to stand as poster-bearers or “sign-walkers” to remind parents in the car pool lane about the workshops that were conducted after school.

The first workshop on parenting was divided into chapters. Chapter 1, Please Take a Picture, included a warm welcome and introductions to put everyone at ease. Chapter 2, Creating Confident Kids, asked parents to identify and discuss things that destroy or build children’s confidence. The group enjoyed hearing the story Love You Forever read aloud. Dinner followed. Chapter 3, Communication That Works, started with parent/child skits to untangle mixed signals and mixed messages that parents send and children receive. Chapter 4, Creating Structure for Achievement, began with the Don’t Yell at Me poem, and continued with discussions about encouraging positive learning and development at home. Chapter 5, Discipline—Practice for Success, was a discussion of good discipline vs. punishment, and ways to teach lessons without imposing harsh penalties.

The second workshop, the following week, continued Chapter 5 by exploring case studies on discipline, positive behavior support, and how to build children’s positive character traits

and sense of responsibility. The participants also discussed the theme “be the parent.” Dinner followed. Chapter 6, What Children and Teens Need to Succeed, included a group discussion about family systems, parents’ roles in family-school partnerships, and related topics. Parents received workbooks, take-home activities, and door prizes.

Parents at the workshops learned that there are many different ways to handle common situations at home as children grow up. By using tested strategies, they may be able to relieve some of their own stress and influence children’s good behavior and strong character. The discussions, skits, role play, and examples at the workshops helped parents consider alternative approaches to solve problems at home. Teachers, who attended the workshops, saw first-hand how much parents cared about their relationships with their children and the school.

While parents were in the workshops, students were busy with activities in a separate room with teachers or childcare workers. The parents valued the information they obtained. In their evaluations, parents reported that the discussions and activities were enjoyable and would be useful at home. One parent reported, “I hope we have more activities like this next year. This will help me with my kids at home because sometimes I don’t know what to do.”

Although the Parenting Partner workshops attracted only a small group of parents this year, Bale Elementary may “grow” the workshops in the future. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and other colleagues may be able to distribute some of the information to all parents including those who were unable to attend the workshop at the school building.

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*Michele Walls*  
Parent Facilitator  
[Michele.walls@lrstd.org](mailto:Michele.walls@lrstd.org)

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TYPE 1

BEHAVIOR

## ROCK QUARRY STUDENT AMBASSADORS AND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

ROCK QUARRY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
TUSCALOOSA, AL

**V**isitors to events at Rocky Quarry Elementary School (RQE) are greeted by a group of 16 students in matching polo shirts who offer a firm handshake, look the visitors in the eye, and say, “Hello and welcome to Rocky Quarry Elementary.” The students are the school’s first group of student Ambassadors—a competitive position that is of interest to many students.

Students in grades 4 and 5 serve as Ambassadors for one full year. Throughout the year, they are given training in becoming leaders. Spring training includes before-school meetings on leadership. After the meetings, students record their reflections on the leadership topic, and their ideas of the values and characteristics that are important for good leaders.

In the summer, Ambassadors read a book about a person that they consider a leader. They prepare and deliver a presentation to the full group during a half-day summer Leadership Academy. The Ambassadors record their reflections on the reports they heard.

RQE Ambassadors develop and transform as leaders over their year in service. The principal shared one story: “....One Ambassador, who is typically shy and withdrawn . . . walked in this morning, came over to shake my hand, looked me in the eye, and said, ‘Good morning, Mrs. Jockisch.’ I was shocked. The program has made a forever difference in this young lady’s life.”

In their first year, Ambassadors greeted visitors at a statewide professional development meeting, a mid-year review of the school by the Tuscaloosa City School Central Office, a school talent show, the fifth grade graduation ceremony, and a kindergarten breakfast. A visiting principal commented, “This PD was fantastic, but I want your Ambassador Program. How

do I start this at our school?” In fact, several principals are adopting or adapting the Ambassador program and Leadership Academy in their schools.

The selection process begins with a letter to parents on the purpose of Ambassadors and the selection process. Interested 3rd and 4th graders complete an application at school, which includes short questions and an essay about themselves and their interest in the position. The applications are graded on the clarity and quality of answers. Teachers complete a recommendation form for each applicant, rating them from poor to excellent on punctuality, cooperativeness, friendliness, attitude, maturity, leadership, effort, respect of others, communication skills, and enthusiasm.

Last year, 64 students applied and 34 were interviewed by a 3-person panel of community members who knew each student only by a code number. Students were rated on appearance, promptness, confidence, communication skills, commitment to community and service, and ability to answer questions. 16 were selected.

Information about the process is shared with parents, who may work with their children on some skills at home. One parent, whose child was not selected, met the principal one day and said, “I want to thank you for starting the Ambassador program at RQE. My daughter asked me questions about how to dress for an interview, what to say to show leadership qualities, and how to act to represent the school. Just the thought of being an Ambassador improved her confidence, attention to manners, and her understanding of what it means to be a leader. I’m so pleased with this process.”

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*Junell “Nellie” Christian  
Gifted Specialist  
jchristian@tusc.k12.al.us*

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## STUDENT OF THE MONTH SPOTLIGHT

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GILLIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LAKE CHARLES, LA

Schools do well when they celebrate what they want to see more of. At Gillis Elementary School—a large school serving students from PreK to grade 5—teachers are working to promote good behavior and good citizenship. Each month, each of the 42 homeroom teachers selects a student who exhibits the school’s motto: “Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Respectful.” The teachers write letters of commendation stating why the student has qualified to be Student of the Month. The students are treated to lunch with the principal or assistant principal.

The idea for this monthly incentive and recognition came from a parent who saw it at another area school that her son attended. The Gillis program is larger and more elaborate than the original. Parents at Gillis are helping to implement the program and play an active role in its success. Community members help, too, by providing funds for the principal’s lunch and extra treats for the nominated students.

Teachers report that most students seek this recognition. They have improved their behavior and work on their leadership skills. One teacher shared, “I think [this activity] is amazing. It rewards students who may not be the best academically, but who work hard and show good citizenship. Students ask me how I select the Student of the Month, and then they try to emulate that behavior, because they really want to get picked.”

The principal and other administrators enjoy eating lunch with the students. They recognize and reinforce the students’ behavior. The PTO creates a bulletin board—Student of the Month Spotlight Board—outside the cafeteria for all to

see. They also make certificates for each student and prepare Gillis Elementary Student of the Month cups that contain several treats and a “free” dress coupon, which permits the student to wear something other than the school uniform on a Friday.

Volunteers decorate the teacher’s lounge, cook and serve a special lunch to students at their designated lunchtime, by grade level. One administrator joins each lunch group of children, bringing his or her own lunch, and chats with the honored students.

Each child has a picture taken with the administrator, which is posted on the Spotlight Board for the month. Last, teachers send home a letter of commendation to the parents so they can celebrate and reinforce their child’s positive social and leadership skills.

Having the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), PTO, teachers, staff, business/community partners-in-education, administrators, and others work together to celebrate students’ good behavior and citizenship is helping to improve the climate and culture of the school. The ATP chairperson is now greeted by students as “the Party Lady.” Conner, a first grade student, gave his views saying, “Student of the Month was really fun. I really liked that sticker thing (to dress as I wish on a Friday).”

Teachers say that when Students of the Month are selected, the other students strive to follow their examples. The Students of the Month benefit by having their efforts recognized and reinforced. This carries over to more good behavior by all students and more productive instruction time in class.

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*Marianne Wallace*  
Curriculum Coordinator  
*Marianne.wallace@cpsb.org*

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TYPE 5

BEHAVIOR

## CAREER CAFÉ

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FRANCIS HOWELL MIDDLE SCHOOL  
ST. CHARLES, MO

TYPE 3

Career Café served food for thought to students about the path through high school and on to college or career. In a friendly café-like setting in the library, guest speakers shared their educational backgrounds and experiences with FHMS students. They started their stories in the middle grades, and described the paths they took to high school, postsecondary education or training, and up to their present occupations. They explained what students needed to do to gain acceptance into a college or training program. The speakers aimed to encourage students to set their own academic goals and maintain good grades.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) adapted the idea from the Technology Cafés conducted at FHMS by the school librarian. During these lunchtime sessions, the librarian introduces new and useful technology skills to faculty and staff. The ATP thought this could be done with discussions of career pathways during students' lunch periods, and invited parents to serve as presenters.

All parents were sent an e-mail asking if they would like to share information about their career pathways with FHMS students. Parents who responded worked with the school counselors to set a date to speak to the students during lunchtime in a Career Café set up in the library. Students received announcements daily could sign up on a bulletin board in the main hallway if they were interested in hearing about a particular pathway. Interested students received a pass to attend the presentation during their lunch break, eating during the presentation.

Parent attendees gained insight into middle grade students' early stages of thinking about college and careers. One parent-presenter shared, "I didn't realize there was such a range of development among the students." Students

were surveyed after each session about whether the presentation increased their career awareness and interest. One student shared, "I want to come to all of the sessions to learn about all kinds of careers." Another said in evaluating the presentation about the military, "That was so cool!"

The ATP learned that many students were reluctant to leave having lunch with friends to attend the Career Café sessions. Often the same students came who did not mind giving up their social lunch period, and who were curious about many career paths. Because the career speakers were so interesting and important for more students to hear, the ATP is considering changing the name to Career Connections and offering monthly presentations and discussions in the school's Character Counts Classes. The most important features of the program are to mix presentations that will interest college bound students with some presentations for students interested in technical education or that delay college enrollment. For example, some local transportation and logistics companies will pay for college courses if young employees show good work habits and want to move up a career ladder within the company.

The presentations by parents and community members helped middle school students broaden their career awareness and ask questions of diverse, friendly adults. By hearing information first-hand in a café or in a classroom, students considered the importance of completing middle school, graduating from high school, and taking an interesting path into the future.

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*Dr. Ted Huff*  
Principal  
*Ted.Huff@fhsdschools.org*

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COLLEGE AND CAREERS

## FUTURE FAIR

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WESTGATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
KENNEWICK, WA

**A**t Westgate Elementary, teachers, staff, and the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) realized that most students would benefit from expanding their career awareness and their long-term goals in education. The activity, Future Fair, encourages students in the elementary grades to think broadly about succeeding in middle school, high school, and beyond to college or a career. This activity also gives students experience in conducting a useful research project and improving their presentation skills.

In a book-study activity last year, teachers and administrators read *Poor Students, Richer Teaching* by Eric Jensen. One topic they discussed was the importance of communicating high expectations for all students to succeed in school and take charge of their futures. The teachers wanted to use Future Fair to help students consider their education, personal interests, and future paths.

Teachers played important roles in Future Fair. K-2 teachers helped students complete art and writing projects on what they might want to be when they grow up. Teachers of grades 3-5 invited family and community speakers to come to class to present information on their backgrounds and careers. The students also conducted individual career research projects, wrote reports, and displayed their findings.

For Future Fair, teachers and staff created posters on their own education and past job experiences, including their photo in an earlier job, in college, or in a “dream” job. This alerted students to the many different paths their teachers followed to reach a long-term goal. About 15 teachers and paraeducators volunteered to welcome families, take photos, enter children in raffles, and talk with the families who attended the Fair.

The school counselor and Communities in Schools coordinator contacted ten local professionals to present information on different

careers to all 3rd-5th grade classrooms. Students prepared questions for their visitors ahead of time. After the visits, students took an interest inventory to identify possible career interests. Some students selected jobs they heard about in class. Others chose the career of one of their parents or other options. In technology lab, student conducted online research about a career of interest. Many students also interviewed at least one community member who worked in their selected careers. All students created tri-fold displays of the information they learned about their potential future careers.

Families attended the Future Fair to view 3rd-5th grade students’ displays in the cafeteria, and K-2 students’ art and writing products in the hallway. Families had their pictures taken at a photo booth in front of *The Places You’ll Go* background. Students entered a raffle to win college-themed prizes donated by the staff and community partners.

All parts of the Future Fair connected students, teachers, families and community members to help students explore various careers. It was easy for all families—including those who spoke about 20 languages other than English—to explore the career displays with their own child. One community member—a World Relief employee—reported, “The refugee parents and grandparents whom I talked to at the event were so proud of their kids. [They recognized the value of] their hard decision of seeking refuge and leaving everything behind to get a better future for the kids.” A 3rd grade teacher praised, “The students worked really hard on their projects. They were so impressive....!” It was clear that this was a job well done!

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Amanda Haan and Kori Cannon  
Teachers/ATP Co-Chairs  
Amanda.haan@ksd.org

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## BITE2GO BACKPACK FOOD PROGRAM

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VISTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
KENNEWICK, WA

TYPE 1

**S**tudents who are hungry tend to struggle academically and behaviorally in school. All students at Vista Elementary receive free breakfasts and lunches, but some families still struggle to provide enough food at home. Vista partnered with 2nd Harvest—a regional hunger relief program—and a neighboring church. Each week, the church donates 50 bags of food purchased from 2nd Harvest (@\$4 per bag) for students and families most in need.

During recess on Fridays, the point-person for the church delivers bags of food to each classroom, and the teacher puts the bags in the selected students' backpacks. When students return to class, instruction resumes as normal so that the deliveries of food remain confidential. Even the volunteer from the church knows only the room number of the class and the number of food bags to deliver.

The school and church coordinators communicate to change the standard schedule when accommodations are needed for early release days or holidays. The bags of food include cereal, entrees, fruit, vegetables, shelf-stable milk, and snack items. The items are ready to eat and no cooking is required. One teacher described the contents as “always good healthy things.”

Most students bring the bags home to share with their family. One teacher explained, “I think our Bite2Go program is beneficial to students and their families. . . . Students and families from my class have said that when they receive canned goods from Bite2Go, it helps ease the stress of having to buy those items at the store and allows the family to save some money throughout the week.”

For a student to participate in the program, a parent must sign a permission slip, which is provided in English and Spanish. At first, it was

a challenge to get the permission slip returned, but with better advertising, the program was more widely accepted by parents. New families are given information (including the permission slip) when they register their children to attend the school. The Bite2Go program has a booth at the annual Open House with some sample bags and volunteers to talk to families about the program. Now, the 50 spots are filled and a wait list was formed to add a new child when a participant moves, graduates from the school, or decides they no longer need the donation.

The regularity and reliability of the program is, according to one teacher, “a source of comfort as much as nourishment.” She explained, “One student came from a family who barely had enough to get by, even with outside help. Each Friday she went home with a smile on her face because of the bag of food in her backpack.” The sponsor also provides food bags during the off weeks of school by delivering “double kits” before school breaks when the students will miss the normal free breakfasts and lunches at school.

Church members have been consistent and helpful partners on other school improvement projects. Some assisted the school in remodeling the courtyard and in building a school garden. Several members became lunch buddies for students and volunteer at other school functions throughout the year. The church has members on the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) to ensure that school, family, and community partnerships are helping students succeed in school.

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*Melissa Whitmore*  
School Counselor  
*Melissa.whitmore@ksd.org*

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HEALTH AND SAFETY

## FAMILY FUN AND SAFETY NIGHT

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RUTH LIVINGSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
PASCO, WA

**S**afety is a serious topic, but it can be discussed in a fun way. At Ruth Livingston Elementary School, the PTO and Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) worked together to present the first Family Fun and Safety Night. Families selected and rotated through several 15-minute presentations that interested them on pharmaceutical, internet, water, fire, car, and personal safety.

Volunteers welcomed families at the check-in desk, and helped with traffic flow and locations throughout the evening. Upon arrival, families met in the cafeteria, where they received a punch card and map to select and find the locations of the sessions they wanted to attend. They could take some time to purchase and enjoy an affordable dinner from Between the Buns—a local hotdog restaurant. Volunteers were treated to dinner to thank them for their time and contributions. When two community speakers could not make it, volunteers stepped in to give their presentations—very valuable!

The safety topics were wide ranging. The school's technology teacher and counselor teamed up to provide a presentation on internet safety that pertained to all students, parents, and family members. Many community organizations conducted presentations and interactions. For example, the Pasco Fire Department brought an ambulance to the parking lot and opened it for tours. They also provided home and fire safety information and plans. One parent shared, "My children were so excited to sit down and make a family escape plan in case of a fire or other emergency."

The Army Corps of Engineers discussed safety on land or water. They demonstrated various rescue scenarios and distributed infor-

mation on how to obtain help, if needed. The Benton Franklin Health Department had an informative presentation on poison control. One of the visual aids compared pharmaceutical medications with candies. Students commented that they never realized how much candy and medicine looked alike. The presentation also included information on what and how to mark harmful home supplies with "Mr. Yuck" stickers.

Another community leader brought a measuring tool to check a car booster seat for families to see if a child was eligible to ride without a booster. The Support, Advocacy and Resource Center (SARC) provided valuable information on personal body safety and explained the organization's role in supporting the community. The group distributed useful handouts and had a game wheel on hand for children to win candy, pencil, and sticker prizes. A PTO member facilitated a presentation with visual aids about the importance of bike helmet safety. The displays and materials for all presentations were well designed, informative, and engaging for more than 130 children and parents in attendance.

At the next ATP meeting, team members reflected on the positive impact of the event. They discussed how to improve the schedule and content the next time this event is conducted. They found that many of the presentations and demonstrations were new to families and students. This reinforced the importance of the topic in their program of school, family, and community partnerships. All parents care about the health and safety of their children, and are eager to have information on the best, feasible ways to keep them safe from potential danger.

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*Tracy Woodard  
Parent – ATP Member  
Magelsen24@hotmail.com*

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## HEALTHY COOKING ON A BUDGET

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JOHN L. MCCLELLAN MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

A healthy diet considers the variety of foods, amount eaten, and nutritional values, according to the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). An endless variety of fruits, grains, vegetables, proteins, and dairy products make up a “diet.” The large number of options and choices may lead many people to wonder if they are “eating healthy.” McClellan Magnet High School is working to help students in grades 9-12 and their families eat healthy, with fewer processed foods and more balanced meals.

On a school survey, parents were asked what workshop topics interested them. They replied that they wanted the school to offer information about preparing healthy meals. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and the school’s parent coordinator reached out to a local health food grocer about putting on a healthy cooking demonstration. The grocer generously donated his time and ingredients for Healthy Cooking on a Budget.

The grocer-chef came to the school and prepared a quick and simple chicken curry for the attendees to sample. If you cook chicken pieces well, then sauté onion until brown, stir in garlic, curry powder, ginger, salt, pepper and lemon juice, and cook for 5 minutes, the aroma will be amazing. One taste convinced attendees that “healthy” can be a synonym for “delicious!” One parent observed, “This is really good food.” During the presentation, the grocer offered tips on healthy eating and wellness strategies. A parent noted that she learned more about the health benefits of various vegetables, and that “some vegetables can really help me with my diabetes.”

Two sessions were held for students and

their parents from 5:30-6:30 p.m. and from 6:45-7:45 p.m. to accommodate parents’ schedules. The Family and Community Sciences classroom accommodated cooking, but with limited seating. Holding two sessions provided the added benefit of doubling the number of available seats for families. The two generations of potential cooks took notes and tasted eagerly.

Students were involved in designing promotional materials for the presentation. Flyers were created by the school’s marketing class and were posted on the school’s social media sites. Members of the school’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) distributed hard copies of the flyer throughout the community, and asked church leaders to announce the event during their services. Information was “blasted” to parents’ and teachers’ phones.

The cooking sessions were right on target. One teacher reviewed, “The parents seemed to have a really good time.” Almost as many teachers as parents attended the grocer-chef’s demonstration. There was high interest among teachers, students, and parents in the grocer-chef’s recipes. This encouraged friendly and important interactions of teachers and parents, parents and students, and all attendees with each other.

Parents’ feedback indicated that more workshops about health and wellness would be welcomed. Such demonstrations could incorporate math skills if students worked on a food budget for their family, or science skills, such as an experiment to measure the calories per gram of food. Parents and students drew the same conclusion from Healthy Cooking on a Budget—eating healthy does not require spending a lot of money and does not require a lot of time.

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*Renitia Bullard*  
Parent Coordinator  
[Renitia.bullard@lrsd.org](mailto:Renitia.bullard@lrsd.org)

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## HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT PARENT RESOURCE NIGHT

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PARK MIDDLE SCHOOL  
KENNEWICK, WA

**S**ometimes trouble lurks right in front of you, but you may miss the clues. In middle school, students make many decisions about whether to get involved in high-risk behaviors. Families want their children to be safe, healthy, and successful in school, and may overlook signs that something is not quite right. School, family, and community partnership programs are important in the middle grades to ensure that parents, teachers, and others in the community are aware of the challenges that students face, and are prepared to discuss these issues with the students who must make wise decisions.

District leaders in Kennewick knew that “it takes a village” to support student health, safety, and success in school. They introduced the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Park Middle School (and other ATPs) to identify community resources that would help parents keep students on a positive path for learning and development, and prevent high-risk behaviors before they became serious problems.

The school’s Parent Resource Night featured Hidden in Plain Sight—a traveling-awareness program designed by an citizen’s group in the neighboring town of Prosser, WA. In this program, parents, other caregivers, and teachers tour a mock teen bedroom that includes 60 clues to possible drug and alcohol use and other high-risk behaviors. The walk-through is followed by a presentation by a Prevention Specialist who explains each clue and how parents might discuss with their teens such things as papers or tests with low grades, drug paraphernalia, cans of air fresheners, vaping, and other items if they are found in children’s rooms, notebooks, or backpacks.

The accompanying Resource Fair included 18 community groups with services to help parents, teachers, and students at Park Middle address

teen challenges. These included health care, employment, career readiness, drug awareness, and summer programs. In addition, at Hidden in Plain Sight Parent Resource Night, the first 50 families received a ticket for a box of food from 2nd Harvest to take home. Families enjoyed a pizza dinner and students played a game of BINGO featuring the community resources at the fair. BINGO winners earned Hero Points, which are part of the school’s incentive program.

While parents toured and discussed Hidden in Plain Sight, Park students attended Mindfulness and Yoga sessions conducted by Washington State University partners. Child care and activities for young children were provided by community partners. The well-planned, comprehensive experience was impressive and appreciated. One parent evaluated, “This was great! I learned so much!” A staff member agreed, stating that beyond students’ bedrooms, teachers “need to know what to look for to make sure students are always safe.”

The ATP and many partners worked together to advertise Parent Resource Night with save-the-date post cards and phone calls to parents. A local news channel broadcasted the date and then attended and reported the event. Park students passed out donuts and flyers to families at morning drop-off and decorated the venue. The ATP worked with the district’s translation service so that Spanish-speaking families felt welcome at Parent Resource Night. The evening, with over 120 parents and students attending, sent a clear message that Park Middle School was serious about strengthening a support system at school, at home, and in the community to ensure the health and safety of its students.

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*Cara Suarez*  
ATP Chairperson  
[Cara.suarez@ksd.org](mailto:Cara.suarez@ksd.org)

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TYPE 1

HEALTH AND SAFETY

## ONENESS PEACE RUN

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STEPHENS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

**T**he Oneness-Home Peace Run, a global relay, was founded in 1987 by peace visionary Sri-Chinmoy. His simple message was that world peace begins in each person's heart, and that each one can play a part in making the world a more harmonious place. International runners carry a torch as a symbol of peace and friendship. The torch has been passed from person to person, community to community, and country to country. Peace runners have traveled through more than 150 nations covering nearly 400,000 miles and touching the lives of millions of people.

An organizer of Oneness-Home Peace Run contacted the principal of Stephens Elementary School to invite students, staff, and families to share in this experience. Peace Run team members were going through the school's neighborhood and the principal was thrilled to have his school participate.

At a school assembly, students in grades 3, 4, and 5 presented information, projects, skits, and songs on peace for students in the younger grades and for family and community audience members. The school choir opened the assembly with a song and welcomed the Peace Run Team runners. Third grade students presented rap tunes and positive phrases on the importance of peace and harmony. Students sang a Song of Peace for the audience and put on a dance performance. They related how PBIS STAR behavior—Safe, Thoughtful, Accountable, and Respectful—dovetailed with the Oneness-Home Peace theme.

Fourth graders designed and decorated unique torches on the goals of Oneness-Home Peace. The torch designs represented PBIS Star expectations that emphasize aspects of peace and harmony.

Students in the fifth grade assisted staff and community members in decorating the cafeteria and the stage, creating banners and table decora-

tions. They played a major role in the Oneness-Home Peace game, led by the Peace Run Team. As clues were presented, students were asked to locate the runner's nationalities and geographic locations on a world map. Stephens' media specialist was impressed with students at all grade levels, "This was one of the most informative activities. It was well presented and displayed our students' talents. I loved the 3rd graders song of peace and the dance routine." A parent commented, "I did not know my child was so passionate about world peace. Her poem brought tears to my eyes."

Peace Run Team members presented information on the importance of living a peaceful and harmonious life and how its effect can be felt worldwide. Being thoughtful, accountable, and respectful of others enhances the quality of everyone's lives. The games and activities provided by the Peace Run Team and Stephen's students reinforced the importance of peace and harmony in our daily lives and in the broader community near and far. See photos at <https://www.peacerun.org/us/news/2018/0507/2715/>.

Stephens' administrators assisted with lighting the official Peace Torch and held a cafeteria perimeter run. This illustrated the run through many countries. The Peace Runners accepted the torch and set out on their route across the U.S. Stephens' students, educators, families, and others were proud of their contribution to the Oneness Home Peace Run, including students' reports on local news stations. School leaders believe that the assembly, presentations, and connections with the Peace Run Team made a unique and lasting impression on students about the goal for peace in the world.

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*Marthelle Hadley*  
Parent & Family Engagement Coordinator  
[Marthelle.hadley@lrsd.org](mailto:Marthelle.hadley@lrsd.org)

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## REAL TALK 2018

SAGINAW HIGH SCHOOL  
SAGINAW, MI

**R**éal Talk 2018 was held during Spring Break to give students and their families time to gather important information for student success in school. The annual event, held since 2011, is hosted by Saginaw High School and co-sponsored with community partners—Safe Schools/Healthy Students, Great Lakes Bay Health Centers, School-Based Health Centers, and Sodexo Magic (a Magic Johnson enterprise). The day-long symposium was funded primarily by Taking Pride in Prevention—a teen pregnancy prevention program at the School-Based Health Centers. Sessions covered information on various health topics that are important for high school students, with a primary focus on STD, STI/HIV prevention. The event also focused on college and career readiness.

Saginaw High School (SHS) is a comprehensive high school with an enrollment of over 600 students, most of whom (90%) are African American. The small city of Saginaw is a manufacturing and healthcare center. The school has faced declining enrollment and budget shortfalls in recent years. Students are the most important “product” of Saginaw.

Parents were invited to attend Real Talk 2018 with their teens. They selected four topics that interested them and rotated through sessions for parents. Topics included: How to help students prepare for college or careers—academically, socially, and emotionally; how to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) when applying to college; ways to ensure good health and prevent STD, STI/HIV; and tips on how to “talk early and often” about healthy sexual behavior. One parent reported, “This was a great opportunity for me to have my whole family engaged together in important conversations about tough subjects.”

Students selected two sessions from 15 topics including college and career readiness; how to complete credits for on-time graduation from high school; and STEM activities for STEM

careers. Other sessions focused on making healthy choices; building healthy relationships; preventing substance and drug abuse; professional dress for interviews; and social etiquette.

To begin the day, students took part in “open gym” with sports and games including an obstacle course, giant twister, and bungee run. A free photo booth also was available. A keynote speaker tied together all of the topics of the day, and attendees enjoyed a presentation by Theatre Troup from Ann Arbor.

A district leader who helped the high school plan and implement Real Talk 2018 commented, “The partnership between the School-Based Health Centers and Saginaw Public Schools Office of Family Engagement has shaped the culture of SHS and the district as a whole.”

Community support was on display at vendors’ booths, many of which were interactive and provided information and resources for families and students on Career and College Readiness and Staying Healthy. At the end of the day, nearly 300 attendees reconvened for a student talent show and concluding remarks. Door prizes were distributed to families and students. A Project Coordinator noted, “Real Talk 2018 helps students have some fun and learn life lessons about making good choices.”

Facing difficult subjects head-on is an important approach to school, family, and community partnerships at the high school level. Real Talk 2018 provided useful resources to parents and students, celebrated students’ talents, and orchestrated honest discussions to help teens make healthy choices and decisions in high school and beyond.

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*Amanda Forsmark  
Project Coordinator/Health Educator  
aforsmark@glbhealth.org*

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TYPE 1

HEALTH AND SAFETY

## SLAM DUNK INTO WELLNESS

INDEPENDENCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
WELDON SPRING, MO

TYPE 5

**L**ife expectancy in the United States declined in 2017 for the second year in a row—a change in the pattern of data over the past 50 years. While explanations for the decline are varied and complicated, wellness programs are part of needed corrections. Independence Elementary School dedicated an evening to start discussions about wellness with students and families.

Parents registered to attend Slam Dunk into Wellness with their children and indicated the sessions they wanted to attend. These included: Family fitness exercise, healthy cooking, yoga, alternatives to technology, art/doodling, family basketball, and—for parents only—understanding and preventing trauma. During the trauma session, students attended an alternative arts and crafts activity.

Wellness is, of course, broader than the selected session topics. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and other school leaders, in consultation with the parent organization, selected a few key aspects of physical and mental wellness that were of interest and value to the families and students at Independence Elementary.

To plan the sessions for Slam Dunk into Wellness, the full team met several times and subgroups were formed to take specific responsibilities for the event. Several parents were responsible for contacting community members to conduct topical activity stations. Others shopped for the necessary items and materials for related activities. Still others assembled the “take aways” at different stations, such as healthy cookbooks, information booklets, and conversations starters. Parents also volunteered to conduct each topical station with a community expert. One parent said, “. . . I’ve never volunteered before because I’ve never really been asked to. It was so fun to participate in the activities with the kids and their parents.”

The family exercise station was no joke. Participants went through a 20-minute warm up, work out, and cool down with a certified CrossFit coach and gym owner from the community. A local yoga studio hosted the yoga session; a basketball coach from the community ran the basketball station in conjunction with Independence’s PE teacher; and a local food company donated the goods for the healthy-cooking station. Other community members assisted at booths on a variety of topics. Parents and families browsed the booths in-between sessions. Topics included: healthy handwashing, fire safety, good mental health, effects of smoking, information on energy drinks, preventing high-risk behaviors, and more.

Several students took leadership roles. About 10 Independence students had yoga training and helped the instructors at the yoga station. Those students taught the whole student body a few specific yoga poses during the school year.

Over 150 parents, students, teachers, and community partners attended the first Slam Dunk Into Wellness. The organizers paired parent and community leaders at each station to encourage good conversations and diverse opinions. School officials were most satisfied that the activities gave everyone a chance to “unplug” together—an important component of wellness. Said one teacher, “This event was so positive because it gave families the opportunity to interact with each other instead of watching TV and looking at devices.” Accordingly, every family received take-away items of a “sleeping bag” for their cellphones and a paper bag for the information they collected.

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*Jana Schultz*  
*Assistant Principal / Parent Involvement*  
*Team Leader*

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HEALTH AND SAFETY

## SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY CONNECTION DAY

WATSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

**W**atson Elementary School is working to connect families to information and resources in the community. By attending monthly community meetings with the Southwest Little Rock Hometown Health Improvement Coalition, the school's Parent Coordinator and Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) learned about a shared goal to help citizens lead good, healthy, and safe lives. The group planned a community activity to share information and resources with all families and students. The area serves large percentages of African American and Hispanic families, and other cultural groups. Watson's principal gave the green light to use the school one Saturday for the Southwest Community Connection Day for Watson and other schools, K-12.

Planning meetings were held every two weeks and, then, weekly as the date in April approached. The group selected a theme—Connecting Parents, Families, and the Community with Resources and Tools for Success. They discussed the goals for Connection Day. Then, the planners surveyed parents on the issues and topics that were most important to them. Subcommittees identified speakers, translators, volunteers, vendors, and entertainment. They developed a sponsorship letter to request donations. Prior to the event, the planning group met at the school to conduct a walk through and create a map of the outdoor spaces for vendors, speakers, food, tables and chairs, and outdoor activities, and a backup plan in case of rain. The principal and ATP checked and approved all plans as they emerged.

On Connection Day, volunteers from the school and community set everything in place. Teachers connected computers and smart boards for speakers. Breakfast snacks and lunches were served to attendees between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. The Little Rock Police Department grilled hotdogs for everyone. Coolers with ice and drinks were strategically placed throughout the building and outside.

The keynote speaker, a local TV news anchor, is a partner with the district's Bully Prevention program. That topic was of interest to everyone. Breakout sessions included: How to Communicate with My Child; How to Deal with Stress; Learning Activities at Home; 2 Healthy Cooking Classes on Yogurt Bowls and Taco Salad; and, Men's Health-Hypertension. The Mexican Consulate of Little Rock provided information on its connections to the community.

Planning included advertising and inviting parents from the elementary, middle, and high schools in the Southwest area. There were flyers, phone calls, and e-mails to all families and in the community. Volunteers supervised a play area for children (e.g., bounce house) and ran the cotton candy and snow cone machines. They helped serve food, direct traffic, clean up, and assist with technology.

About 250 people—students, parents, community members, and teachers—participated. Watson's students connected with students from other schools, including the middle school they will attend. Watson's families met families from their own and other neighborhoods. A Parent Facilitator from a neighboring school said, "This was a great turnout for a Saturday event in this community." A parent stated, "I enjoyed everything. The vendors were very informative and the speakers were knowledgeable."

Connection Day enabled neighbors to meet and learn about their schools and community services. They learned that good things were happening with good people in the Southwest area of Little Rock. Watson Elementary School was glad to show that it was not only a school, but also part of the community.

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*Tagel Muqtasid*  
Parent Coordinator  
[Tagel.muqtasid@lrsl.org](mailto:Tagel.muqtasid@lrsl.org)

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## TECH NIGHT: INTERNET SAFETY AND AWARENESS / CYBERBULLYING SAFETY

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MARIE CURIE STEM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
STEVENS MIDDLE SCHOOL  
PASCO, WA

**T**wo schools in Pasco, WA, Marie Curie STEM Elementary School and Stevens Middle School conducted workshops for students and parents about social media and internet safety. Teachers know that students' will continue to use their computers and smart phones in many ways, but they want to encourage positive and safe uses of the internet.

**At Marie Curie** the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) realized that cyberbullying was increasing at the school—a problem faced by schools across the country. The ATP and other teachers created a workshop for students and parents in grades 3-6 to reduce or eliminate cyberbullying among students. They also wanted to make parents aware of positive strategies for helping their children use the internet in safe, fun, and productive ways.

The school counselor contacted the local SARC Office (Support, Advocacy & Resource Center) for information for parents about parent controls, online predators, and local resources and services available, if needed. The SARC presentation was made in English and Spanish. Parents asked many questions about keeping their children internet-safe. Parents took home a copy of the SARC presentation, pamphlets, and other resources to discuss with their children. Attendees also took home a box of groceries from 2nd Harvest. One parent commented, "I never knew what my kids were doing on their phones, and now I have an idea of how to keep them safe."

Students had their own presentation provided by the Vice Principal. He made it fun and informative by making jokes, asking questions, and asking students about apps that are on their phones, tablets, and gaming devices. They

discussed how some people they "meet" online are not who they say they are. They also talked frankly about how everything they do online is there forever.

**At Stevens Middle School** the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) surveyed parents early in the school year on information they wanted or needed. Preventing cyberbullying and increasing online safety were the most requested topics. Stevens Middle also partnered with SARC for presentations for families and students.

The ATP scheduled two monthly meetings that were conducted in English and Spanish for about 35 families. The speakers discussed internet safety, preventing cyberbullying, and the dangers of online sexual predators. In their evaluations, parents noted how much they did not know before, and how the sessions gave them tools and strategies to monitor their children's internet and technology uses more closely. Teachers, too, reported learning new information on how students were sharing explicit, personal information. The ATP is planning to share the information with parents who could not attend the workshops at school.

The two schools—elementary and middle—gave attention to timely topics that parents requested to keep their children safe on the internet and social media. Students, too, gained fuller understanding of the cyber world. They learned that teachers and staff at their schools are on their side and will address their questions or concerns. There is a new cyber world out there and students are a part of it. Programs of school, family, and community partnerships should consider ways to help students and parents understand and use these essential tools.

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*Lindsay Marcus*  
5th Grade Teacher (Marie Curie Elementary)  
[lmarcus@psd1.org](mailto:lmarcus@psd1.org)

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*Raquel Martinez*  
Principal (Stevens Middle School)  
[ramartinez@psd1.org](mailto:ramartinez@psd1.org)

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## BRIDGING UNITY AND A SENSE OF BELONGING

HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
SEATTLE, WA

**H**awthorne Elementary School regularly schedules an African American Parents Coffee and Chat. The family support worker, partnership team, principal, and teachers learned of a trend in state data indicating that, on average, the school's African American students were falling behind others in meeting achievement goals. Other data showed an increase in homeless families. In discussing these issues at the Coffee and Chat, the African American parents supported an ambitious agenda to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate this achievement gap. One part of this agenda is to encourage more African American parents to become engaged in their children's education at school and at home.

In its annual plan for partnerships linked to its Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), Hawthorne scheduled several activities before, during, and after Black History Month for Bridging Unity and a Sense of Belonging. To start, a local African American artist agreed to create a series of six paintings that symbolized the six grade levels (K-5) at Hawthorne. Teachers invited every student to draw one important thing about his or her life and culture on drawing paper. The artist collected the themes and patterns from the children's drawings and sketched six paintings, entitled "Cultures of Hawthorne."

On a coordinated schedule, teachers sent small groups of students to help the artist paint the sketches and sign their names. When the artwork was displayed at family and school partnership events, students pointed out the parts they painted and their names. Many parents asked if they could buy prints of the art.

To advance children's knowledge of African American art and culture, the art teacher guided the creative work by students from Kindergarten to grade 5. They studied and created work (e.g., collages, quilts, portraits, block prints) inspired by Alma Thomas, Romare Bearden,

Faith Ringgold, Jacob Lawrence, and Delita Martin, respectively by grade level.

One partnership activity to Bridge Unity and a Sense of Belonging was Hawthorne's National African American Parent Involvement Day (NAAPID). Parents came for breakfast, stayed for presentations, and ate lunch with their children. Musical groups performed and community partners had booths to share information on their services for families and students. African American parents were invited to students' classrooms to discuss their careers. Their various jobs included a rapper, bakery owner, black history historian, film and skit director, artist, and members of the coast guard. They rotated through several classes. One parent explained, "It is important for our children to see their classmates' parents involved in projects in school and to hear their stories."

Other events for students celebrated African American's contributions to the quality of life, including an MLK Assembly and a Black History Assembly with performances from students and community members. At the end of the month, parents were invited back for an evening discussion on Cultivating the Genius of Black Children. The speaker emphasized the importance of children's learning styles and how children's histories and talents affect learning. Parents were eager for information to help them guide their children's success in school. They had many questions for the speaker and for teachers and counselors at the school. A family pizza dinner, childcare, and door prizes were provided by community partners. African American parents praised Hawthorne as a welcoming, respectful, and lively place where families are valued as partners in their children's education.

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Melissa Mak  
ELL Department Lead  
[mbmak@seattleschools.org](mailto:mbmak@seattleschools.org)

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TYPE 3

MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

## CULTURAL FAIR

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ORCHARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
RICHLAND, WA

**T**he Cultural Fair at Orchard Fair Elementary School reflected the school's vision statement that students are passionate and compassionate learners. One member of the staff explained, "Our Orchard vision of embracing diversity, valuing individuality, and growing our hearts was on full display at the Cultural Fair. The displays were educational, fun, and beautiful. [It was] a wonderful evening for all!"

Orchard Elementary serves mainly Caucasian students, but also includes Hispanic, Asian, and African American students. A good number of students' families are new to the U.S. Some are bilingual and some are learning English. This diversity enriches the school environment, and provides an important opportunity for students, teachers, and families to learn more about each other.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) formed a committee led by the librarian and several teachers to plan the Cultural Fair. This group worked with the PTO and students to recruit families and community members to set up booths to display and share their cultures with others. She worked with students during their library periods to conduct research on different home countries of the school's families, and to create those countries' flags.

In their music and art classes, students learned how different cultures express themselves. During recess, students worked on dance performances that reflected cultures from around the world. The planning team reported that the involvement of the specialty teachers added to the quality of the Cultural Fair. The art, music, PE, and library teachers spent many extra hours to help students learn about the various cultures that would be featured at the fair.

The ATP and others conducted several advertising and marketing strategies to increase

interest in and attendance at the Cultural Fair. Students were eager for their families to see their artwork and watch their musical performances. The multicultural families were anxious to have other families come to enjoy and learn from their unique booths and displays.

Students had a "passport" that was stamped when they visited the countries at different booths. Over 300 passports were distributed to students with their families. Many teachers, too, came to watch the students perform and learn more about the different cultures at the school. Students' artwork lined the halls, and the gym was decorated with flags from many different nations.

In this school, all students are creative, curious, and socially responsible. They enjoyed learning about art from different countries. Specifically, 5th graders learned Amate Bark paper painting from Mexico, featuring colorful flowers, birds, and things in nature. 4th graders made clay African masks; 3rd graders studied and drew Egyptian pictographs and petroglyphs; 2nd graders created parade elephants from India; 1st graders made Japanese carp kites; and kindergarteners made and played with Russian nesting dolls.

The world was truly on display. One participant summarized: "The Cultural Fair is one of the best events I've ever attended. It brings our community and families together. We open our hearts and minds to each other and learn about the places we all come from. Students are excited to show off their culture, and parents make new friends with other families they would not normally meet. It's just terrific!"

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*Jennifer Hubbard*  
5th Grade Teacher  
*Jennifer.Hubbard@rsd.edu*

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## ONE SCHOOL, MANY CULTURES

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HARVEST RIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
ST. CHARLES, MO

**T**he Action Team for Partnership (ATP) at Harvest Ridge Elementary is working to engage more parents as partners in the school community. The School Improvement Plan includes a goal for a positive climate of good partnerships. Parents rate the school on an annual climate survey and the school leaders want to earn high ratings on this survey.

At One School, Many Cultures students celebrate and share the traditions, holidays, food, and cultures of their own families and other families at the school. The school includes 7% Hispanic students, 13% African American students, a percentage of students from India and other parts of Asia, and many white students whose families are from many countries and cultures. The ATP knew from experience that One School, Many Cultures was a surefire way to celebrate the cultural diversity of the student population and their families.

A task force of parents, students, administrators, English as a Second Language teachers, paraprofessional, other classroom teachers, and community members planned the activity. This group set a date and theme for the event, and invited parents and community members using various technologies. Invitations were sent to all parents via the principal's newsletter, monthly Coffee Talks, school's Facebook page, website, flyers, and communication system.

Parents registered to host a booth, share a performance, make a presentation, provide refreshments, and/or welcome attendees. Community members also were invited to participate in these ways. Students had important roles, too. They communicated the invitation to families, greeted participants, distributed information, and created and presented information to the audience.

The task force set the schedule of events from 5:30-7:30 p.m., assigned locations for booths and presentations, and made flyers to welcome

people to One School, Many Cultures. Families representing a particular country shared food and artifacts, and/or gave performances about their traditions and cultures. There were several opportunities for students and parents to create artwork, describe or demonstrate celebrations, and discuss information about their country. Students also presented projects and information at a whole-school assembly earlier in the day to encourage attendance at the main event.

Students benefitted from One School, Many Cultures as they learned about other students' backgrounds. Many connected and started to build relationships with students who had different backgrounds and traditions. Teachers expect that the new connections may help reduce behavior infractions for inappropriate language and bullying. One School, Many Cultures helped students see that the diversity of students and families added value to the school. One student stated, "It was so neat to learn more about everybody. I never knew all the things my friends [and their families] could do."

Parents found they had many things in common with other parents with different ethnicities, and that they could work together in ways that supported their children as students. One parent shared, "It was nice to come together to share ideas and practices with each other."

Our schools and our country are growing increasingly diverse. There has never been a better time to learn to live together and benefit from one another's wisdom and experiences. Over 150 parents, 250 students, 20 community members, and about 75 teachers and staff came together to celebrate many cultures in one school.

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*Dr. Natalie DeWeese*  
*Principal*  
*Natalie.deweese@fhsdschools.org*

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TYPE 2

MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

## 8TH GRADE FAMILY KNIGHTS

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FRANCIS HOWELL NORTH HIGH SCHOOL  
ST. CHARLES, MO

**T**he transition to high school is an especially important move that can affect students' success in school and in life. At one of Francis Howell North High School's (FHN) quarterly Coffee with the Principal meetings, parents suggested actively connecting with the middle school to prepare 8th graders and their parents to make a successful transition to 9th grade at FHN. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) followed up the parents' suggestion and designed an evening for middle school students and their families to learn what to expect in high school.

Because FHN is a large school serving about 1,750 students, the ATP planned to host the meeting at the middle school where students and families felt comfortable. They worked with colleagues at the middle school to develop and schedule the evening. Both schools advertised 8th Grade Family Knights via newsletters, e-mail, and with other reminders to parents and students. A Knight is FHN's mascot, and "The Knights" are in the names of clubs and athletic teams for boys and girls.

Over 200 people attended the transitions meeting, including some from the local parochial school who will attend FHN. The program featured a large group presentation to welcome attendees and to orient them to the schedule for the evening. Then, small-group sessions were conducted so that everyone received the same information and had time for discussion and questions. Each person's name tag was coded with five colored stars to show the order for attending five topical sessions.

One session, conducted by the FHN counselors and guidance officers, provided a gener-

al overview and welcome to the high school. Another session addressed parental involvement opportunities with the PTO, Action Team for Partnerships, and other ways. Third, a panel of current high school students, parents, and staff described their experiences at FHN and took questions. Fourth, the athletic director explained all of the sports and related activities at the high school, and encouraged student to select a sport or club they will enjoy. Fifth, parents from the athletic teams' and band's boosters presented information. All presenters addressed the 8th grade students' and parents' questions.

The focus on small group presentations encouraged more discussion and more questions than if one large group met to hear all five presentations. This plan helped the rising 9th graders and parents feel more comfortable and less shy about voicing concerns. One parent noted that students are anxious about moving to high school and succeeding there, and so are their parents: "Parents of first-time high schoolers are a nervous bunch, so the opportunity to ask questions and hear experiences from others in a small group was nice."

The chance to make connections at 8th Grade Family Knights not only was helpful for the rising 9th graders and their families, but also was fun. The middle schoolers appreciated all of the representatives from FHN who made the trip to share information and calm some fears. One of the high school students on the featured panel explained, "I think this night helps eliminate misconceptions that middle schoolers have about high school. It was fun talking to them."

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*Erin Steep*  
Assistant Principal  
*Erin.steep@gmail.com*

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## ENGAGING FAMILIES IN HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS: STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

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INGRAHAM HIGH SCHOOL  
SEATTLE, WA

**M**aking a successful transition to high school helps students take the next steps to pass their classes, obtain credits for on-time graduation from high school, and participate actively at school. Further, when students transition to high school, their parents transition with them. Moving from middle to high school is a shared journey for students, parents, and teachers.

At Ingraham, the partnership team believed it would build students' confidence to take responsibility for conducting an academic conference with a parent—replacing the traditional parent-teacher conference. Also, in the past, families of students in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program were more engaged with the school than were other families. The partnership team aimed to close the gap in family engagement starting with the new 9th graders.

9th grade student-led conferences with parents were designed to help freshmen make a successful transition to high school by being active players in their own education. The school wanted students to feel “in charge” of their progress through 9th grade, and not just bystanders. Student-led conferences could, if well implemented, create more equity in the number and diversity of families who felt welcome at school and who engaged in discussions with their teens on their work and progress.

Each conference was a scheduled appointment for the student and at least one supportive parent or family member. Because many students had never conducted this kind of report, reflection, and conversation, they were given a guiding-script in their history classes on conducting a successful academic conference focused on their grades and attendance in the first semester.

Students were prepared to discuss their academic and behavioral goals and expectations, evaluate their progress so far, and discuss their next steps with a parent. The students accepted responsibility for their performance, which gave

them a new experience in self-evaluation and in having open and honest dialogues with a parent. One teacher reported that the students really did well, “We should do this for all students in the school. It was a wonderful experience. I cried when students presented the work they were most proud of.”

All students who completed a student-led conference earned a school spirit t-shirt. To add to the sense of community, bilingual upperclassmen were recruited to help welcome families in their home languages, direct them to specific rooms, and provide childcare for families who needed help with very young siblings. Parents and students could have dinner at school and visit a community resource fair. There were booths with information on legal immigration services, graduation requirements, a local teen health center, a community tutoring and after-school program, health and dental care at a dental van onsite, a food bank assistance programs at the school, and more. This was student-led conferencing with a sense of community.

About 300 of 350 freshmen and their parents participated. The healthy turnout was the result of active marketing efforts including flyers sent home, reminder texts, postcards, and personal phone calls to families. The phone calls required help from several volunteers at schools. Other partners coordinated an EXCEL sheet to keep track of all of the students' conference appointments.

The first implementation of student-led conferences at Ingraham was rewarding and beneficial to students who took a big step forward in their own education. The conferences were appreciated by parents—many previously uninvolved—who were welcomed to their teen's high school in a unique and important way.

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*Nicole Hawkinson*  
*Academic Intervention Specialist*  
*[nrhawkinson@seattleschools.org](mailto:nrhawkinson@seattleschools.org)*

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TYPE 2

TRANSITIONS

## KINDERGARTEN READINESS FINE MOTOR TOOLKITS

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BADGER MOUNTAIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
RICHLAND, WA

**G**oing to kindergarten is an important and exciting milestone for young children. In kindergarten, children learn many things including academic and behavioral skills, how to work independently and with others, and large-motor and small-motor skills. Students' experiences leading up to kindergarten are not uniform, and some students are more prepared than others for kindergarten tasks. Teachers at Badger Mountain Elementary School noticed that some students needed more practice on their fine motor skills. They wrote a grant and were awarded \$1,000 by the Richland Education Foundation to address the need.

Badger Mountain is a suburban school with an enrollment of about 600. About a third of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The school used the grant funds to purchase and assemble a Fine Motor Toolkit for each incoming kindergartener. The kits included scissors, playdough, *Wikki Stix*, pipe cleaners, pony beads, pompoms, alphabet cards, a small golf pencil with an eraser, a clothespin, and white index cards with simple lines to practice tracing and cutting. It took some time for teachers to assemble the kits for all incoming kindergarteners. In the future, they may invite parents, the PTO, and/or high school students to help prepare the kits for distribution.

Each toolkit included a brief activity card printed in both English and Spanish, which suggested the following activities:

- Playdough: Roll playdough and form the letters of ABC flashcards
- *Wikki Stix*: Make shapes
- Clothes Pins & Pompoms: Make a game of picking up pompoms with the clothes pin
- Index cards: Draw lines (an enclosed sample card showed some different line shapes to try)
- Pencil: Practice writing and drawing simple pictures

- Scissors: Cut on the lines of an index card to make strips

Children improve small motor skills through play and practice. The materials in the kit are common, fun, and easy for all parents to use with their children.

Because future kindergarteners were not yet on the school campus, the teachers went to the students' homes after school to meet the children, parents, and deliver the kits. They posted flyers in several neighborhoods indicating what day and time they would come by to visit. At the stated time, they walked the streets and made home visits with kits and cookies in tow. A school administrator also came with kindergarten registration packets for the families.

With this person-to-person distribution method, future kindergarten student not only received a kit to help develop their fine motor skills, but they also met their future teachers. "My daughter is so shy," said one parent, "it was nice for her to get to see and meet her kindergarten teachers. The smile on her face made me happy!" The participating teachers also were happy to distribute the materials and make connections with the students and families they would meet in the fall. Kits that were not distributed were taken back to the school to be given to parents when they registered their children for kindergarten over the summer.

Teachers are confident that the kits will encourage more incoming kindergarteners to arrive with improved fine motor skills and increased confidence about their work. This will reduce some of the frustration and disappointment that some students experienced in the past on kindergarten activities.

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*Kristi Beach and Tonia Kostorowski*  
*Kindergarten Teachers*  
*Kristina.beach@rsd.edu*

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## PARENT SPRING FLING

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H. B. RHAME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
COLUMBIA, SC

**D**uring the National Week of the Young Child in April, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and teachers at H.B. Rhame Elementary wanted to inspire and enable parents of young learners (PreK-2) to be engaged in their children's education at school and at home. Over 90% of students at Rhame qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. All teachers, parents, and staff are working to ensure a positive school climate and student success at each grade level (PreK-5). The Parent Spring Fling aimed to reinforce the importance of parents as partners for the long term.

Earlier in the school year, many parents participated in Makerspace with Mom and Discovery with Dad. These events were designed for parents to gain an understanding of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) concepts and classes. At these popular sessions, teachers worked with parents to craft a vision of STEAM activities at school that could be supported and enhanced at home. Parents strengthened their understanding of the school's vision that students could succeed at a high level, and how they could support this goal at home.

The next step was taken at the Parent Spring Fling—a full day extravaganza for PreK-2 students and their parents. Each classroom conducted a station with activities linked to grade-level learning standards in reading/literacy, and STEAM subjects. The PreK-2 classes were assigned a station rotation schedule for students and parents to visit all of the learning stations. Support staff and teachers facilitated activities at the hands-on locations: puppet making, flower designing, planting and gardening, creative expressions and games, and literacy BINGO.

As classes rotated through the stations, 150 parents and 300 students and their teachers were guided to exercise logic, reasoning, critical thinking, and creative expression to complete

the activities in the station rotation. They were able to engage and collaborate with each other as they completed the tasks. Students enjoyed having their parents, grandparents, or caring adult alongside them assisting in the learning process.

Parents took a break in the media center for a Lunch and Learn session with the principal and the district's parent engagement specialist. They discussed strategies and parents' questions about student attendance, academic standards, and summer enrichment activities that would help students transition successfully to the next grade level. Then, parents rejoined their child at lunch for a community theatre presentation of Chicken Little, which helped students discuss the importance of believing in yourself and working together with others.

Parents could attend the Spring Fling at any time during the day that was convenient for them. One father reported, "I'm glad I came. I really enjoyed working with my son at all the different stations. This is something you should do, again, next year." A teacher agreed, "Parents loved the station rotations. It was great to see so many parents were here to support the event." The Countdown to Kindergarten was particularly popular.

The ATP agreed that this should be an annual event. They plan to work with the local college and high school to recruit more volunteers for more stations so that learning will occur in small groups. The principal commented, "It was amazing seeing the number of parents who participated in this all day event. Parents who were assisting the teachers and staff made the impossible possible."

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*Clarissa Hinton*  
*Parent Engagement Specialist*  
*Clarissa.hinton@richlandone.org*

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TYPE 2

TRANSITIONS



# 3

## CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS



Practices for Types 1-6 in this section involve families and community partners to help create a welcoming, family-friendly school. These practices aim to reach out to involve all families and the community.



## DESTINATION NIGHT

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SUNSET VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
KENNEWICK, WA

**S**unset View is a Kids at Hope school. All teachers and staff believe that all students are capable of success—no exceptions! In the second year of developing this belief system, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) focused on getting families and community partners to rally around the concept of Kids at Hope. Over the years, there has been a change in the school's demographics and a slight decline in students' test scores. It was clear to school leaders that before test scores could improve, the school needed to set a positive path for how teachers would work with every child and how families were engaged as partners in education.

Destination Night promoted the vision that every child can work to succeed at life's four major destinations: Home & Family; Education & Career; Community & Service; and Hobbies & Recreation. The community around the school stepped up to support students and their families with information and services on the four destinations. 25 community groups and organizations participated in Destination Night. Grade level representatives on the ATP went back to their colleagues for each grade level to select one of the four destinations to host at the event.

A map of the building and a flyer showed parents and students where to find the four destinations, the activities at each location, and the community partners who were participating. A "passport" was stamped at each destination for students to document their visits.

At the Education and Careers destination, for example, the K-1 team of teachers showcased science topics and occupations. Nine community booths and demonstrations were set up at this destination including the Hanford High School Robotics and Engineering Team, Rocks and Minerals Club, and National Society for Black Engineers.

At the Home and Family destination, 2nd

and 3rd grade teachers hosted a photo booth for students and parents to take a picture as a family and receive a digital print. There were seven community booths at this destination, including the YMCA and Benton Franklin Health District with information and discussions of family activities and services.

The 4th and 5th grade teams of teachers hosted Communities and Service. At this destination, photos of community service projects that Sunset View's students participated in throughout the year were displayed. These included Sock-It-To-Me benefitting Safe Harbor, Nursing Home visit, and Jump Rope for Heart. Four community booths presented information including Pennies for Patients Kickoff, and the Benton Conservation District.

Specialty teachers hosted the Hobbies and Recreation destination, which showcased musical performances and Nutrition Bingo & Fitness Fun in the gym. Six community booths brought displays and information including Boy and Girl Scouts and the Mid-Columbia Gymnastics.

Advertising included letters home, student-made posters, the school mascot stirring up excitement, the school reader-board, and event-reminder stickers for students to wear home. The effort resulted in a packed house on Destination Night with over 700 people attending. The energy and interest were amazing: students and parents gained new knowledge and made new connections to travel toward their destinations. Each child was honored and respected at each destination to help them see that they all were heading toward success—no exceptions!

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*Shannon Clarke and Mariana Karnesky  
2nd and 4th Grade Teachers  
Shannon.clarke@ksd.org  
mariana.karnesky@ksd.org*

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TYPE 1

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

## FAMILY LOVE

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FAMILY LIFE CHILD CARE CENTER OF BEREA  
BEREA, OH

TYPE 2

Love was in the air and on display on Valentine's Day at the Family Life Center. The Family Love project engaged families and children working together and discussing their feelings for each other. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATPs) at the Center brainstormed ways to involve all families in a holiday activity that could be completed at school or at home.

The staff at the Center reviewed their use of the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment Preschool Program (DECA) on young children's emotional learning. DECA is a strength-based assessment and planning system that aims to promote resilience in children ages 3 to 5. This aspect of student development is hard to "standardize," but is an important goal at the Center in preparing all students to move on to kindergarten.

Previously, the Center administered DECA, but parents were not directly involved in ways linked to students' emotional learning. To increase parent participation, the Family Love project opened an avenue for parents and children to talk with each other about their feelings.

A week before Valentine's Day, a table was set up in the school hallway. It was set with cutout hearts, stickers, and a basket of markers, with clear instructions for parents and students to talk together about their feelings and love for each other and for family, and create their Valentine design together. A chart of children's faces illustrating a wide variety of emotions was taped on the wall by the table for easy reference. Parents were invited to work with their child to complete a heart in any way they liked. They could add words or decorate their heart to show the things they loved.

They could complete the project when they came with their child in the morning, or at the

end of the day at pick-up. Or, they could take the heart and materials home to complete with their child at a convenient time, and deliver the finished project to the Center the next day. Parents and children could complete as many hearts as they liked.

Parents were asked to use the time as they worked on the project to talk with their child about their love and affection, other positive feelings, and how they expressed many different emotions at home and at school. The chart of children's faces helped spark some interesting discussions.

Another basket collected the completed hearts with artistic elements and heartfelt messages. The completed hearts were displayed on a large bulletin board for all to see. Families were encouraged to write their full names on the back of the hearts so they could be returned to them after the holiday.

The ATP, teachers, and staff at the Center were pleased with the results of this simple, inexpensive project. It is easily adapted to other grade levels, and other holidays or themes (e.g., Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, Father's Day, 4th of July). Sometimes parents have a hard time letting their children know how much they love and care about them. Similarly, children do not always get an opportunity to express and explain their love for parents, relationships with siblings, thanks for home and family, and other experiences. One parent card maker said, "I enjoyed spending the time with my child to create this heart." And a student exclaimed, "I love my mommy!" All of these exchanges help strengthen a child's emotional development.

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Alicia Gresko  
Preschool Head Teacher  
[Alicia.Gresko@familylifecenters.org](mailto:Alicia.Gresko@familylifecenters.org)

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CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS



## GREENWOOD GAME NIGHT

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GREENWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
FLORENCE, SC

**W**e are fam-i-ly” was the message heard loud and clear at Greenwood Elementary School’s Game Night hosted one chilly autumn evening. Families enjoyed playing board games, and dads and moms were invited to show off their culinary skills by participating in Dad’s Chili Cook-Off or Mom’s Cookie Bake-Off (or Mom’s chili and Dad’s cookies). Greenwood is a Title I school in a rural area with 740 students, K-6. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) team wanted to promote ways early in the school year for families to feel welcome at the school and to communicate with each other. Cooking and games seemed a good approach to get families to talk and play together without using technologies require individual attention to screens.

Parents signed up to participate in the cooking contests on an entry form. Posters lined the school’s hallways; phone calls were made; and the school marquee and car rider signs advertised the game night and contest. More than 60 families (over 140 family members) and 20 teachers participated, including many competing cooks.

Moms and Dads displayed their entries of chili and cookies as they gathered in the cafeteria. As the tasting by judges proceeded, families went to the media center to play board games. Some teachers joined in the fun, playing along with the families. The leaders of Greenwood Game Night placed the games in the media center to make sure that families had enough room and judges had time and space to test the chili and cookies.

Greenwood teachers and some students served as judges and scored each entry with

the precision of an episode of *Chopped*. Rating sheets and criteria were shared with contestants beforehand, including taste, texture, presentation, and creativity. Ratings on a 5-point scale ranged, for example, from “yuck” to “delish.” After the judges made final choices, everyone reconvened in the cafeteria for the award ceremony. While waiting for the outcome of the contest, one student shared, “My mom and I have been trying out different recipes to make the winning cookies!”

First, second, and third place Chili-Cook-Off and Cookie Bake-Off winners were announced. Winners were given trophies and etched cookie plaques for their delicious entries. Unique “awards” were designed by a community member. One parent stated, “This was such a fun evening. I’m glad I came. My child reminded me all week about this event.” After the awards were given, families were able to enjoy samples of the chili and cookies.

Eighty-four board games and refreshments for the evening were purchased with a small grant from the school’s family and community engagement partner, Francis Marion University’s Center of Excellence. Board games also were given out as door prizes for family game night to continue at home. The remaining board games were placed in the Media Center and could be checked out by students and families at any time.

The winners of the cooking contests and door prizes were not the only “winners” at Greenwood Game Night. The activity brought families to a welcoming school to meet, eat, and play together without technology tempting them to isolated screen time.

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Angela Haddle  
Lead Intervention Teacher  
anewman@fsd1.org

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TYPE 1

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

## OLYMPICS DAY AND COMMUNITY CARNIVAL

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COLLEGE OAKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LAKE CHARLES, LA

TYPE 3

**A**t the end of the school year, each grade at College Oaks Elementary School was assigned a different country that they studied in class and in student projects. In addition to extending students' knowledge about and appreciation of different cultures, the school supported a "bonus" activity—Olympics Day for friendly competition in games between "countries" at each grade level.

Students made flags for their assigned country, which they marched on the field in opening ceremonies. Students at each grade level were sure their flag was "the best." All students' projects, reports, and extra flags were displayed in the school hallway for visitors to see on Olympics Day.

A community partner donated t-shirts in different colors for each grade level, representing each country. Parents and other family members volunteered to guide the games or came to support the players. In several cases, parents' countries of origin were the nations assigned to some grade levels. When the games included Puerto Rico, one parent cheered enthusiastically, "That's us! That is where we are from!"

An Active planning group of members of the Action Team for Partnerships, and other teachers and parents selected the games, considered the many countries of origin of students at the school, and organized the schedule that would be fun for the students and audience of family members. It was important that all students and all grade levels had an opportunity to participate. Everyone celebrated the opening and closing ceremonies together. Two grade levels competed in blocks of 45 minutes on selected Olympic-style games. In class, the PE teacher reviewed how to play the selected games and each student signed up for one game to play.

College Oaks Elementary based its good organization of Olympics Day on experience

with large groups of parents and family members that featured students' activities. Earlier in the year, the school conducted a Community Carnival. Whereas Olympics Day was held during the school day, the Community Carnival was held in the evening when more parents could participate.

The Carnival offered activity booths, games, and food stands, staffed by teachers and parent volunteers. The evening of fun and games also served as a tribute and "thank you" to parents for the many things they do for the school, for their children, and for the community. In addition, the Carnival included all students' literacy projects at each grade level. The students' reading/writing work was displayed in the hallway for parents to review and discuss with their children.

College Oaks' principal remarked that, "It was heartening to see our true community come together as one. I loved seeing many former College Oaks students on campus enjoying the event with all of our current students." Over 200 parents (of about 300 families) participated at the Community Carnival compared to 75 who participated on Olympics Day.

Both events, Olympics Day and the Community Carnival included parents as active planners of important celebrations of the school community. Parents were involved in planning, conducting, and evaluating both of these events. The combined efforts of teachers and parents reinforced the school's commitment to teamwork for good partnerships in children's education. One attendee summed up many reactions to these whole-school gatherings, "College Oaks always finds ways for students to have fun while they learn."

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*Darlene Gauthreaux*  
Curriculum Coordinator  
*Darlene.gauthreaux@cpsb.org*

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CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

## PANCAKES IN PAJAMAS

LEBLEU SETTLEMENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
LAKE CHARLES, LA

**L**eBleu Settlement is a rural community where families are actively involved with the Pre-K to 5 elementary school. Pancakes in Pajamas was a fun Christmas-season event for families to create holiday crafts, have breakfast with Santa and take photos to celebrate the season.

LeBleu is a long-standing member of NNPS. The ATP has a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships to engage parents and community partners in ways that are linked to improving student achievement in specific subjects, good behavior, and other goals in their own School Improvement Plan. The school also conducts some “just for fun-welcome all” activities that are very popular spirit-builders—like Pancakes in Pajamas.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), PTO, teachers, and staff met together to revise and improve the school’s original Breakfast with Santa. Parents, children, teachers, and the community look forward to this event, but the school partnership leaders wanted to make it even better. They included more and different activities and booths for the school and community to share information and resources. The busy venue created opportunities for attendees to gather, meet new and familiar neighbors, and strengthen relationships with the school.

The planning group also used the popular breakfast as a fund-raising activity for the school. Tickets at an affordable price were sold to enjoy breakfast with Santa. This raised enough to replace the school’s old, broken marquee.

Parents and staff spread the word about the event through social media and word of mouth. Automatic telephone messages were made to families, and newsletters were sent home with students. Over 400 parents and community members joined students and teachers to enjoy the festivities. As one staff member said, “It

is so nice to be able to build relationships with parents and families that are not in an academic setting.”

The team worked to find breakfast donations of pancakes, syrup, juice, butter, utensils, plates, and napkins from different businesses in the community. Hallways and the cafeteria were decorated for the season. Volunteers from the community set up booths with different activities. The 4-H Club sponsored making Christmas cards to send to soldiers. Parents volunteered as photographers to take pictures of students and families with Santa. The Student Council, Art Club, and Library Club supervised making holiday crafts.

Families came in their pajamas, just for fun. They signed in at a ticket table and then were free to visit all of the stations to conduct activities in any order. There was a lot going on. One parent said, “I love not having to stand in a long line at the mall and pay \$30 for my kids to take pictures with Santa.” A student had a different favorite, “I liked the pancakes instead of donuts this year. Everyone was so friendly whether it was a teacher or someone’s parent.”

The planners were pleased to take a long-standing activity and make it stronger, more inclusive, more cheerful, and helpful for students (who made great cards and gifts, for their parents); for parents (who appreciated the photos with Santa and time with friends); and for the school (that strengthened connections with so many parents and got a new marquee). The activity reinforced the school’s commitment to good partnerships, and put everyone in a festive mood.

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*Ashley Fancher*  
School Counselor  
*Ashley.fancher@cpsb.org*

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TYPE 3

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

## PRINCIPAL'S PLATFORM

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LINCOLN CHARTER SCHOOL  
YORK, PA

The saying goes that the best way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time. To fully understand parents' perceptions, needs, and feelings about a school is a little like eating an elephant—it is best to go one step at a time. The ATP and others at Lincoln Charter School knew that all parents were not on campus every day for a quick chat, and group meetings did not always allow everyone to speak their mind. Further, students' needs vary by grade level and affect parents' views and requests of the school.

Leaders at Lincoln understand these difficulties. The school serves about 700 students from Pre-K to grade 5, including 47% Latino students, 44% African American students, and a small percentage of Caucasian and Asian students. The school's partnership program has been designed to include a steady stream of outreach activities, including a series of contacts with the principal. Parents give the school a rank of 90% for its welcoming climate. The mayor of York said, "LCS is a utopia for the community of York."

The principal's outreach activities include:

Call a Couple Monday: The principal randomly selects a few parents every Monday to call by phone and discuss what they think of the school, and what they would change if they were in charge.

The following activities are scheduled once a month over the school year:

Tea & Title I Tuesday: The principal has tea with parents and discusses data on the Title I program and various services.

Walk of Wisdom Wednesday: The principal walks with a small group of students and parents

around the school grounds, beginning with a quote and ending with a discussion.

Coffee & Concern Thursday: The principal has coffee with several parents and listens to their views and concerns one grade at a time.

Fun for Fifteen Friday: The principal hosts at school and joins students and parents for after-school basketball, Frisbee throwing, jump rope, relay races, and other fun activities.

Safety in Seconds Saturday: The principal sends out one school rule and the reason for the rule on auto-dialer twice per month.

Friday and Saturday connections are for all students and families. The other activities are advertised via the school's social media and up to 10 tickets are issued to interested parents. The advertising flyer is translated into multiple languages, with hard copies sent home with students. Sometimes the principal invites parents from groups whose voices must be heard. In these cases, it is made clear to the parent that their child is not in "trouble." Rather, their participation and views are valued.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at the school notes that the small group format, regular schedule, and participation of the principal in these activities contribute to the school's welcoming climate. Parents know they are part of the school decision-making process, and the principal benefits from hearing from many different parents.

At Lincoln, the monthly Principal's Platform is coordinated by the school's Parent Liaison, who is a member of the ATP. Her assistance to the principal makes the process sustainable. The diverse activities to engage parents are at the

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*Anne Clark*  
*Director of Community Outreach*  
*aclark@lincolncharterpa.com*

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# 4

## DISTRICT, ORGANIZATION, & STATE LEADERSHIP



Practices in this section help facilitators in districts, organizations, and states strengthen leadership and assist schools in developing effective programs of school, family, and community partnerships.





## ATP IN ONE CLICK

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PASCO SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PASCO, WA

**T**he leaders for partnerships in the Pasco School District work with all 22 schools on goal-linked programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Each year the leaders create useful tools and procedures to help the chairpersons of the Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to strengthen their leadership skills, improve teamwork, and increase the quality of their programs of family and community engagement. This year, they created an “explainer video”—a brief overview of the role of the chair or co-chairs of the ATP.

Sometimes it is difficult to convince a teacher, parent, counselor, or other member of the ATP to become team leader. Some people are shy or unsure of their leadership skills. Once in the role, some wonder what must do as ATP chair or co-chair. The video summarizes important information on the role of chairperson, and gives prospective leaders a glimpse of what they can expect in this role.

The idea for this new tool was inspired by an “explainer video” created by the district’s Director of the STEM Initiative & Instructional Technology. She collaborated with the leaders for partnerships on the ATP video using *Raw Shorts* ([www.RawShorts.com](http://www.RawShorts.com))—a free platform to create animated videos from text. One partnership leader, Coordinator of Special Programs, developed the script to address these questions:

- What is ATP?
- What are the Six Types of Involvement?
- How do YOU fit into the ATP formula?
- What can you expect as an ATP chair?
- What does involvement in ATP offer?

She recorded the script as an audio file and found pertinent photos and graphics for the video. Still another department, Public Affairs, converted the audio clips into one file for final formatting. Clearly, close collaborations across district departments helped the family engage-

ment office bring this project to fruition.

ATP in One Click summarizes the “basics” of the NNPS model. These include: (1) how to develop goal-linked programs using the framework of Six Types of Involvement; (2) how to encourage team members to work together, share leadership, and draw from each member’s talents; and (3) how to select, implement, and evaluate family and community engagement activities that will contribute to students’ success in school. The video also lets ATP chairpersons know about the training, recognition, and funding that will support their work. See ATP in One Click at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCAKnhYFezs>.

When the video was completed, Pasco’s leaders featured it the ATP Chairs’ Kickoff training. They also attached a copy to the first monthly e-mail to ATP chairs and school principals at the start of the new school year. The video is posted for current and future ATP chairs on the district’s ATP webpage under “ATPs Tools.” It is expected that ATP in One Click will encourage team members to step up to fill the critical role of chairperson. Principals reported, “This is a great tool to use.”

Pasco district leaders believe that, with on-going facilitation, all ATP Chairs can strengthen their leadership skills and manage an effective partnership team. This position is both challenging and enjoyable. Each ATP is an important structure for continuous school improvement. The video recognizes how important the ATP and its chairpersons are for schools to engage all parents and community partners in ways that support student success in school.

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*Lorraine Landon and Esmeralda M. Valencia*  
*Coordinator Special Programs and*  
*Parent Engagement Coordinator*  
*llandon@psd1.org and emagana@psd1.org*

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## DEVELOPING PARENT LEADERS FOR MORE SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

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MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT  
EL MONTE, CA

### DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

**L**eaders at Mountain View School District are aware that research confirms that children do better in school if their parents are involved in their education. The district of K-8 schools serves a large percentage of Hispanic students and families. To enable more Hispanic parents to feel confident about guiding their children through the grades, Mountain View partnered with the California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) to offer parent workshops—but with a twist. The goal is for parents who attend CABE training workshops to share the information and strategies they learn with other parents.

If parents are able to lead workshops for other parents in English and Spanish, more and different parents may be willing and able to attend the sessions at their own schools. The process of parent-led workshops also empowers the parent leaders to get more involved on school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs), on District Advisory Councils, or on other committees.

Some may serve as advocates for their own children or for other students who need special attention or services. One active parent reported, “We just helped a parent whose child was not going to be promoted from 8th grade to high school. Parents need to help each other to help their children succeed. We must bring light to our homes.”

The district leader for partnerships and colleagues met with CABE representatives to plan the schedule of workshops for parents. CABE conducts 2INSPIRE workshops at the Awareness, Mastery, and Expert Levels. The 12 topics in this series includes: Parent Involvement—Helping Your Child Achieve Academic Success; Building Bridges—Family and School Communication; Education in a Digital World; Understanding the U.S. System of Education; Basic Components of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESSA); Common Core State Standards; An Introduction for Parents on School Accountability; Academic Programs; Role of Parent Committees; Beyond High School; Early Childhood Education; and Goal Setting. Parents who completed the series received certificates to recognize their accomplishments.

The district office shared the names of the program graduates with principals who could request them to conduct workshops for parents at their schools. The school’s community liaison worked with the parent leader to identify space at the school for the 12 meetings, and to recruit interested parents. The district helped the parent leaders with their materials and equipment for the meetings. A ceremony of completion celebrated the accomplishments of each new group, thereby continually scaling up the number of parent leaders in the district who, in turn, could prepare other parents.

Because the 12 sessions cover many topics, the parent leaders often invited experts in the district, school, or community to present information on their specialties. For example, a school board member came to discuss the organization of the district. At another session, the district’s Director of Family and Community Engagement came to discuss the ESSA law.

The district is excited about the growing number of parents who are aware of their children’s schools and educational programs. District leaders will be monitoring the impact of the investment in parent leaders on measures of student learning and indicators of success across the grades.

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*Angelica Sifuentes-Donoso*  
*Director of Family Engagement &*  
*Extended Learning*  
*asifuentes@mtviewschools.net*

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## ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH A CREATIVE ARTS

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GENERAL MCLANE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
EDINBORO, PA

**T**he arts bring students' learning to life. In the McLane School District, teachers know that the visual and performing arts stimulate students' creativity, curiosity, imagination, and self-expression. Students' talents promote positive support and admiration from parents and other family and community members. The district and its four rural schools are working to help all families understand that art classes and techniques help students explore the world around them, which, in turn, may increase students' confidence in learning.

For many years, the teachers of special subjects (e.g., art, music, media) at Parker Middle School in the district have engaged students in art classes and an Arts Expo. District leaders were interested in learning whether that school's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) could serve the district as a whole by broadening outreach and participation in the Creative Arts Expo.

The district's two elementary schools and one high school were invited to attend the middle school's Expo, along with the community at large. District leaders for partnerships took responsibility for advertising with press releases, information on the district websites, and flyers that students took home inviting families to join in the fun.

Teachers of the arts were primarily responsible for organizing the evening. The ATP at the middle school took charge of creating a Makerspace, supported by a small grant from the district's guiding partnership program leader, the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN). The Makerspace at the Expo included materials and tools for creating artwork, inventions, and other hands-on projects that they could take home.

One of the many creative—and most delicious—activities at the Creative Arts Expo was a Cookie Baking Contest. Teams of students had to create an original recipe and bake about

300 cookies to enter the contest. Thousands of cookies were made. As families visited the Expo, they tasted one cookie from each team and voted on their favorite cookie. The Cookie Baking Contest was a yummy hit, and all families felt like “winners” as they enjoyed many good cookies.

Another popular and creative project was the Wax Museum. Students dressed up as historical figures and posed as statues. They came to life when families approached and asked them questions. The statues gave brief summaries of the significance of the characters they were portraying.

Students took the lead on several aspects of the Expo. Some students drew caricatures of people as they were enjoying the many exhibits and activities. Other students served as family leaders. They guided their parents and community partners to participate in hands-on art projects like those that students completed in class. Examples of students artwork created during the school year were on display.

Over 550 people attended—double the number that came when only the middle school was involved. The middle school principal was pleased to see the school activity expand, saying, “The level of energy and amount of people in the building for the Creative Arts Expo was absolutely amazing!”

The arts were alive and well in the General McLane School District. The Creative Arts Expo brought the school and community together to celebrate students' creativity and love of the arts.

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*Jason Buto*  
*K-12 Curriculum Coordinator and*  
*Middle School Principal*  
*[jasonbuto@generalmclane.org](mailto:jasonbuto@generalmclane.org)*

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DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

## FAMILY BILITERACY PROGRAM

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MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT  
EL MONTE, CA

### DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

In Mountain View School District, district leaders tested a program for parent and child pairs to read and discuss books in Spanish and English. The district trained one teacher and Community Liaison in six schools to conduct the Family Biliteracy Program. About 60 parents and 60 students participated in these after-school parent-child reading groups.

Each school invited bilingual parents and students to participate in a 16-week program to read and discuss four books—each one for 4 weeks. The bilingual, illustrated books were: *Tata's Remedies* (i.e., a story of an elder's expertise in the healing power of herbs and plants); *Little Chanclas* (i.e., a tale of Lilly, her family, and her flip-flops); *Juan Verdades—the Man Who Couldn't Tell a Lie* (i.e., a complex tale of truth, lies, a farm, and an apple tree); and *Family Pictures* (i.e., a story of Carmen's everyday life and dreams of being an artist). In addition, parents read *Wonder/La Leccion de August*, by R. J. Palacio (i.e., the story of a child with a facial deformity that leads to bullying at school, but, then, to students' friendships and success).

The students and parents read the books, discussed themes as a group, and strengthened their bilingual language skills in English and Spanish. Each meeting provided many opportunities for vocabulary development. In week 1 for each book, vocabulary words were introduced to students and parents, along with information on a family project that each parent-child pair had to complete by week 4. In weeks 2 and 3, parents and students conducted dialogic reading and questioning activities to understand and talk about the main themes of each book. Also, during this period, an extra forty-five minute session was conducted for parents to discuss *La Leccion de August*, including themes of courage,

family, and acceptance. In week 4, parents and students presented their projects that were based on a theme or event in each book.

The unique focus on bilingual reading, discussions, and projects helped students build reading and other English Language Arts skills that they could use in other subjects. The program also aimed to increase students' love of reading and pride in home culture. Pre- and post-vocabulary tests revealed that a majority of students improved their English vocabulary. Most parents reported that they were able to extend the group activities that they conducted at school to support their children's reading at home. The discussions increased parents' feelings of responsibility for involvement and their efficacy in supporting their child's reading, speaking, and listening skills.

The Director of Family Engagement and Extended Learning evaluated the results of the program. She said, "We heard the voices of our families saying 'We want more. We want to learn.' This program helped them become more confident and empowered to participate in their children's education."

The activities drew on parents' linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills to expand their English vocabularies and biliteracy. The students and parents reported that they found the group sessions helpful and the books "life changing." The testimonials at the closing event from students and parents were emotional and inspirational. Students expressed their love for the books that they read, and parents expressed their gratitude for the program.

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Angelica Sifuentes-Donoso  
Director of Family Engagement & Extended  
Learning  
asifuentes@mtviewschools.net

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## GPS (GUIDED PLANNING STEPS) TO EFFECTIVE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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SAGINAW SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SAGINAW, MI

Sometimes school teams hit road bumps and need to be rerouted. District leaders in Saginaw Public Schools are working to ensure that all schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) and School Improvement Teams (SITs) are on the same path to increase student success. The District's Family & Community Engagement Specialist and the Director of State and Federal Programs worked together to pave the way for student success with the engagement of family and community partners.

They agreed there is no disconnect between the goals in the School Improvement Plans that describe how teachers work with students on academic and behavioral outcomes, and the goals in the ATPs' Action Plans for Partnerships that engage families and community partners on activities to help student attain the same goals. These leaders believed it was critical to bring everyone together so that the term "partnership" was clearly defined. In that way, family and community engagement activities could be linked, specifically, to school improvement goals for academic achievement, culture, and climate.

Not wanting to leave this to chance or "just words," the leaders of the two offices coordinated professional development sessions in the fall and spring, supported by Title II and other grants related to school improvement. The leaders linked the professional development to a visit by an NNPS Senior Program Facilitator who clearly connected the missions of the SIT and ATP. This discussion and related activities showed that the work on family and community engagement was not "extra" work, but was "the" work needed to mobilize all available resources—at school, at home, and in the community—to support student learning and development. The district leaders also gave all representatives on the SIT and ATP many opportunities to see how some of

their responsibilities on their respective teams were different from each other. They could make choices, clarify duties, and ask questions at the initial workshop and at monthly check-ins throughout the year.

At the workshop, members of the SITs and ATPs worked in small, mixed groups. Each group focused on academic, culture, and climate goals in their own School Improvement Plan. The combined SIT and ATP subgroups brainstormed and selected family and community engagement activities that would help students reach those goals. The district-level leaders assisted the school teams when they had questions.

This collaborative work resulted in better, clearer plans that connected teachers' goals and lessons with specific family engagement activities focused on the same goals. For example, if teachers at a school were working on helping students improve math skills, then the partnership plan would include activities to engage parents in ways that supported students' math learning (e.g., discussing math homework; talking with students about their personal goals for increasing math competencies). In turn, teachers accept the challenge of developing communications and/or activities to guide all parents in how to help at home in feasible and fun activities at each grade level. A teacher summed up the reactions of about 130 people at these sessions, "It finally all makes sense. I feel like we are headed in the right direction by focusing collaboratively in class and with family and community partners on the goals for student success."

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*Tiffany L. Pruitt  
Parent, Family & Community  
Engagement Specialist  
District Title I & Safe Schools/  
Healthy Students Programs  
tpruitt@spsd.net*

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DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

## IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR—BUILDING AND SUSTAINING PARENT LEADERS THROUGH PARENTING PARTNERS

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LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT (LRSD)  
LITTLE ROCK, AR

### DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

In one well-known regimen—trainer of trainers—groups or individuals who receive training pass along their knowledge to another group. This model was used by Little Rock School District (LRSD) to enable school-based teams help more parents become partners in their children's education. District leaders explored the Parenting Partners program. The Title I Parent & Family Engagement Specialist took the lead and prepared a Title I Coordinator to conduct workshops for school teams who could, then, conduct workshops for parents. Ten schools elected to participate in this program (i.e., 5 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 1 high school). One district-level group also participated.

Each school sent teams of 4-8 members for training. They included administrators, school parent liaisons, teachers, parents, and community members. Most of the participant also were members of the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). Parenting Partners conducted the workshops for the initial leadership teams to show them how to work with their students' parents. The teams gained knowledge, skills, and a number of activities. Then, using flyers, electronic messaging, and personal phone calls, each team of "trainers" invited their students' parents to attend a series of 5-7 workshops during the school year to become more aware of school programs and how guide their children's learning. The workshops for parents were conducted in English and, as needed, with Spanish translators.

Topics included activities using the NNPS Framework of Six Types of Involvement to support student with math and reading/literacy skills. Parent participants received a Parenting Partners Handbook to take home. The workshop leaders encouraged parents to review the workshop materials and use the strategies with their own children at home. One parent

attending the workshops reported, "I never would have bonded with other parents like this before attending these classes."

The district's Title I Department hosted a graduation for the parents who completed the training. The participants were encouraged to invite their families to It's a Family Affair. At the closing exercise, the LRSD Superintendent and Title I Coordinator welcomed the participants, congratulated them, awarded certificates, and named them "LRSD Ambassadors" who could, then, share their knowledge and workshop activities with other parents. Other awards were presented to recognize special talents and perfect attendance. The LRSD Communication Department photographed the participants with their certificates and awards. The completion ceremony was filmed and shown on LRSD-TV, Facebook-Live, and other media outlets. One parent shared, "The graduation was special to me because I have never worn a graduation gown before!"

It's a Family Affair was a win-win experience for all involved. It benefited parents who gained good information at the sessions and who built positive connections with other parents. Teachers and district leaders benefited by strengthening their connections with families and by increasing the number of parents who learned ways to support their children's learning. As one teacher who was part of the team of trainers said, "After facilitating the sessions, I will incorporate some of the activities in my class with my students and their parents." It's a Family Affair helped many parents become confident and engaged parents who can help their children succeed in school.

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Kaye Rainey  
Specialist, Parent and Family Engagement  
[Kaye.rainey@lrsc.org](mailto:Kaye.rainey@lrsc.org)

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## LEADING BY EXAMPLE

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PASCO SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PASCO, WA

**A**n overarching goal of Pasco School District's leaders for partnerships is to strengthen the skills of the chairpersons of the Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) in all 22 schools. This year, the leaders developed a comprehensive communication plan to share useful information and resources that would help ATP chairs have teams that continually improve the number of families who are engaged in their children's education, and the number of students who succeed to their full potential.

Pasco leaders have weathered many changes and challenges for more than 12 years as they worked with NNPS to build a strong and sustainable partnership programs at the district level and in all schools. They transitioned well with new district leaders, new partnership leaders, and many changes and additions in the schools. The district has made continuous progress in implementing goal-linked partnership programs in all schools at all grade levels.

In the 2017-18 school year, leaders selected the theme "Making Connections with ATP" and used Cluster Meetings to share new information and resources with ATP chairs. One leader explained, "These meetings offer valuable time for ATP chairs to collaborate and brainstorm ways to scale-up the quality of their schools' partnership programs."

At one meeting, an Associate Professor of Bilingual Education for Washington State University discussed ways to reach out, intentionally, to all families. Chairs worked in small groups to write a one-minute elevator pitch to explain the purpose and responsibilities of an ATP. At other Cluster Meetings, leaders of various district offices discussed how they could support all school-based ATPs. For example, the Director of STEM Initiatives shared ideas and materials that ATPs can use to conduct a STEM Family Night at their own school. The Public Affairs Director, Community Connections Manager, and leaders of other offices described

the support they can provide including help with flyers, translations and childcare.

Once, during the year, the family engagement leaders reviewed the purpose of Title I Part A with a PowerPoint presentation and summarized research on the results of well-planned engagement activities. ATP chairs brainstormed ideas of how to engage all people in a child's "inner circle" in addition to a mom or dad, such as the abuelita/grandma, neighbor, siblings, and others. ATP chairs who miss meetings are sent e-mails with a summary and materials from the meeting.

District leaders supported ATPs in other ways. Five chairpersons, teams, and principals were recognized at a School Board meeting for having activities published in the NNPS book, *Promising Partnership Practices 2017*. These schools also presented their activities a Cluster Meeting for all ATP chairs. All ATP chairs were given applications to submit a best practice to the next NNPS book and to apply for a Partnership School Award in the next cycle.

District leaders for partnerships continue to share monthly newsletters and e-mails with ATP chairpersons. They also visit school teams to discuss their One-Year Action Plans and challenges. Principal Chats are conducted on how ATPs work to engage all families to help the schools reach the District's new "Outrageous Outcomes" in the Strategic Plan and Policy.

These and other district-level leadership activities are helping all schools in Pasco have well-functioning ATPs that conduct activities with all families to reach goals for student success. The district is, in fact, a national leader on partnerships. It is leading by example.

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*Esmeralda M. Valencia and Lorraine Landon*  
*Parent Engagement Coordinator and*  
*Coordinator Special Programs*  
*emagana@psd1.org and llandon@psd1.org*

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## SOAR INTO SUMMER FOR A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEAR

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RICHLAND COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE  
COLUMBIA, SC

### DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Each summer, students and teachers look forward to a well-deserved break. It is important for students to have time to unwind, relax, and enjoy summer activities. There is a tendency, however, for students to lose skills learned during the school year if they avoid them totally during the summer. This phenomenon, known as “summer slide” or “summer learning loss” will require remedial instruction when school starts in the fall. The losses may accumulate over time and contribute to an achievement gap between low-and high-income students. It is well documented that students who read, use math, write, think, and create during the summer are more likely to start strong in the new school year.

Richland County School District One’s Superintendent knew that minimizing the summer slide was important. He wanted to provide families with information and resources to help students keep using some school skills during vacation.

Richland One conducts an array of academic programs, summer camps, and enrichment programs in its schools to provide some students with learning experiences. This summer, the district leaders added an event to share strategies and tips with families that they could conduct at home to keep their children engaged and learning. Working on the belief that a successful school year begins in the summer, SOAR Into Summer Success was designed as a fun, family-oriented day filled with games, examples of easy-to-replicate learning activities, food, raffles, and door prizes. Lots of information and resources were available to families to help children stay engaged and learning in the summer.

Schools, district departments, and community agencies/partners were invited to offer resources at their booths. Donations and sponsorship packages were used for summer

opportunities and special scholarships for students. Over \$3,000 was donated by local businesses.

SOAR into Summer Success was held on a Saturday morning in a building at the local fairgrounds. Staff welcomed over 400 parents and students to a festively decorated building with a balloon archway. Each parent received a bag full of books, activities, and other resources for their children. Volunteers were on hand to help. Schools at all levels, 11 district departments, and over 30 community members set up exhibits with information for families about summer programs and activities. All exhibitors and vendors created interactive, colorful, and engaging displays for attendees to try right there.

Children and families visited the Games Stations where they could win prizes. The games focused on math skills and were designed to be easily replicated at home. For example, Dunk the Pong was a fun way to add, subtract, gather data, and think logically to win the game.

Parents evaluated the event very positively, saying things like, “My family and I enjoyed everything,” and “I hope this occurs every year.” The district’s Director of the Office of Federal and State Programs shared, “I was impressed with how well organized everything was! What a model we have for future events! Thank you for helping a vision/discussion/idea become reality!” It seemed that families were eager to gather ideas on how to keep their children on the right path through the summer.

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*Debra Knight*  
*The Office of Federal and*  
*State Programs Coordinator*  
*Debra.knight@richlandone.org*

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## STRENGTHS-BASED YOU-NIQUE SHOWCASE

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NAPERVILLE COMMUNITY UNIT  
NAPERVILLE, IL

Naperville 203 is a nationally-recognized, high-achieving school district. Yet, many of its students feel pressure to excel at everything. To ensure students' healthy development, the district adopted a standards-based Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum. SEL prepares students to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become more self-aware; self-manage; and build and maintain positive social relationships with peers and adults at school, at home, and in the community.

The district partnered with Gallup Strengths-Based Leadership Coaches to orient social workers, parents, and students to SEL and to understand that students' well-being is linked to student achievement. Parents are important partners in SEL. They can talk with their children about their emerging talents. Using a list of over 30 "themes" that identify different strengths, is it easy to help students see that they have many gifts that enrich their lives and the lives of others.

Parents may discuss with their children which talents they want to develop, and which make them happy. Parents and teachers have the same ultimate goals—to have confident kids who become self-directed learners and who are able to solve problems on their own. In this way, SEL may develop children's knowledge and self-direction along with social skills for positive interactions with others.

The parent co-chairs of the District's Core Partnership Team participated in a "Strengths-Based Parenting Facilitator Training Program." The workshop helped the leaders for partnerships learn about SEL. They gained strategies to talk with children about their strengths and talents at each stage of development from early childhood to adolescence. With this training, the Core Team developed a district-level workshop to orient parents to SEL and its links to their children's well-being. Parents who registered for

these workshops were given books on SEL and a reading assignment. They also were asked to identify and record their own top 3 talents and their child's top 3 talents.

Prairie Elementary School's Partnership Team was inspired to offer the training to their students' parents. At Prairie's workshop, the school social worker introduced the main concepts of SEL. The principal and Partnership Team designed the YOU-nique Student Showcase as one SEL activity. Students created a storyboard describing their talents and strengths. The team leaders reported, "Parents thought it might seem like braggadocios, but they found that students were really focused on the internal qualities that make them who they are."

Students used a Name It, Claim It, and Aim It strategy to describe their talents; identify the "power" that talent brings to them; and discuss how they might develop and use this strength. Teachers modeled the approach by displaying their strengths and talents on a bulletin board. The YOU-nique Student Showcase gave students an opportunity to identify many different strengths and talents beyond those typically discussed (e.g., art, music, sports). These included strength of character, community service, cultural understanding, and leadership.

The YOU-nique Student Showcase demonstrated that children were willing and able to talk about their talents and strengths. They enjoyed discussing why their social and emotional skills are important to them. This is a different way of thinking about students' achievements from discussing test scores. Children's varied strengths and talents are important aspects of their wellbeing and critical drivers of satisfaction and fulfillment.

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*Julie Carlsen*  
*Director of Community Relations*  
*[jcarlsen@naperville203.org](mailto:jcarlsen@naperville203.org)*

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DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

## TITLE I PARENT RIGHTS VIDEO

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KENNEWICK SCHOOL DISTRICT  
KENNEWICK, WA

### DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

In many situations, “less is more.” To limit the number of meetings families had to attend, Kennewick’s district leaders for partnerships designed a short video to help all families understand Title I regulations and parents’ rights and responsibilities in a Title I school. Title I legislation requires schools to share this information with families. Historically, it was difficult for all parents to attend a meeting at school. The new video covers the required topics, is easily accessible from home, and may be used as an “opener” at other family meetings or events at school.

Both the school staff and families appreciated the video, which provided information in a family-friendly way and in clear, understandable terms. One parent who previewed the video understood the content well, “It is great that my kids can get more services in these schools!”

Kennewick serves families with diverse backgrounds. When the video was completed, two interpreters translated the information into Spanish and Arabic and staff recorded the voices on the video in English, Spanish and Arabic. The district plans to prepare the video in other languages of its families, including Russian, Somali, and Karen. The translations were tested for clarity. Said one parent previewer, “I never knew what a Title I school was. Now I know. We don’t have that in my country.”

To begin the process of making the video, district leaders followed the guidance given by Washington state’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). They created a storyboard with the audio on one side and their ideas for visual supports on the other. They then used the *PowToon* website, which advertises “Make Awesome Videos Yourself.” After some experimenting, the Parent Rights video was drafted at just over two minutes long. After final edits and translations were complete, three videos in

English, Spanish, and Arabic were sent to the principals and vice principals at all Kennewick Title I schools. These leaders were asked to run a “loop” in the school entryway on TV, or put a link on the school website. They also were guided to show the video at the start of a well-attended meeting with families, such as Open House Night—one of the best-attended meetings of the year in many schools. The district posted the video in three languages on YouTube (at Title I Parent Rights Video) for easy viewing.

The cost to create this resource was \$96 for a yearly subscription to *PowToon*. This district investment yielded a product that was helpful to the ten Title I school principals and parents. Another district that saw the Title I Parent Rights video is now looking into creating a similar tool for its families.

The video makes it clear the importance of school and family partnerships in children’s education. It explains that parents have the right to student report cards, information on the qualification of teachers, and the results of state and local assessments of children’s progress toward targeted learning goals. It welcomes parents’ engagement in their children’s education.

Kennewick’s leaders for partnerships are happy to create useful tools to insure that more parents know how to access available resources at their school, in the district, and in the community. Then, they can spend less time trying to find these services and more time supporting their children on the road to success.

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*Sarah Del Toro, Kelly Bolson, and  
Nesreen Al Muzayen  
Family and Community Engagement and  
Immigrant and Refugee Coordinators  
Sarah.deltoro@ksd.org*

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## YOUTH & FAMILY LEADERSHIP “UNCONFERENCE”

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SAGINAW SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SAGINAW, MI

The goal of the Youth & Family Leadership “UnConference” was to help students become stronger leaders, better students, and part of a more accepting and equitable school community. The District Family & Engagement Specialist reviewed feedback from families and other stakeholders from past conferences. She recognized that most of the programming and attendance in the past was by and for elementary students and their families. With district goals for high school graduation in mind, the district leader for partnerships decided to re-direct the annual conference to focus on programs and activities for students in middle and high school. If students increased their leadership in their own education and had information on future education plans, and if families supported their early and later adolescents, then more students might do their best in school, stay in school, and graduate from high school on time.

A focus group of middle and high school students discussed some best ways for schools to engage their families and community partners. The feedback from students was supplemented by information from a community partner who had great interest in this topic. With this input, district leaders planned a targeted and focused family day—an “unconference”—just for older students and their families—or as some students explained, it was “for the bigger kids.”

Youth organizations and student groups participated on the planning team. They selected session topics for middle and high school students and parents. There were sessions for students (alone), parents (alone), and students and parents together. Students made some of the presentations, as did teachers and invited speakers. Community partners and district departments were invited to create booths with resources on their programs and services.

Sessions were conducted on the district’s Family and Community Engagement and

Empowerment Center, mental and behavioral health services, LGBTQ services, college and career readiness programs, health & wellness, self-care, youth and family leadership, and human services. The sessions were appreciated, as reported on an evaluation form at the end of the day. A student said, “I loved all the different classes because the speakers were lively and motivating. A parent added, “This was an amazing family day filled with many tools I can put in my ‘parent toolbox’ so I can continue to lead my family towards success.” There also was a short Step Show for entertainment and various impressive prizes donated by community partners (e.g., flat screen tvs, bikes, games, laptops, gift cards and more). Students selected and organized the food and entertainment. Parents served as volunteers and participated in activities. Students helped market this event at each school.

Some students said the event motivated them to succeed in school in order to apply to and attend college. Similarly, parents gained strategies on how to support their child at home academically, socially, and emotionally. The day, organized at the district level for all students from grades 6-12, also served as an example for individual middle and high schools to consider conducting a similar school-based “unconference” with targeted topics of interest to their own students and families. At each school, there are emerging student leaders to help plan and organize such meetings, and many students and parents who are eager for information to increase student success in school.

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*Tiffany L. Pruitt  
District Family & Engagement Specialist  
District Title I & Safe Schools/  
Healthy Students Programs  
tpruitt@spsd.net*

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DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

## CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (COE) SUMMER INSTITUTE 2018

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CENTER OF EXCELLENCE – FRANCIS MARION  
FLORENCE, SC

### ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP

**T**he mission of Francis Marion University's Center of Excellence (COE) is to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty is to increase the achievement of children of poverty by improving the quality of undergraduate teacher preparation, graduate teacher preparation, and professional development for practicing teachers. COE's Summer Institute is a two-day workshop that provides participants with practical, research-based approaches to meet the needs of under-resourced learners. The Center's leaders, staff, student assistants, and University faculty worked together to plan the Institute and all of the details required for a big conference—from vision to vittles.

The Summer Institute started several years ago to support COE's mission. It is now well known for its quality professional learning programs and for equipping teachers with knowledge and skills needed to work with parents, health and human service providers, and other community services to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of children of poverty. COE also is an active advocate for these children.

Attendees at the most recent Summer Institute included college students who were preparing to be teachers, faculty from several local colleges and universities, practicing teachers, and other educators from across the state. These participants had many different certifications and specializations. COE also guides districts and schools in South Carolina to develop their partnership programs and join NNPS. Leaders from these schools also attended the Summer Institute to strengthen their practices of family and community engagement. In response to the wide-ranging interests and responsibilities of the attendees, the institute planners included general and targeted sessions of interest. COE and the University publicized the Summer Institute with e-mails, newsletters, and social media.

Three keynote speakers and over 40 specialized breakout sessions addressed classroom

strategies and best practices on this year's theme: Challenges and Opportunities: Teaching Children of Poverty. COE also hosted a post-conference session, Poverty Simulation, which was a popular addition to the Institute.

The breakout sessions were led by area educators. They focused on understanding and meeting the needs of children in poverty and included best practices. Many focused on how to build effective and equitable school, family, and community partnerships that would contribute to student learning and development. This included improving students' positive behavior and problem solving skills. Other sessions explored how to create conditions for children to strengthen their resilience to obstacles in learning and life, and how to improve social and emotional skills and well-being, including feelings of empathy toward others.

The Poverty Simulation was reported in detail by COE in *Promising Partnership Practices 2014*. This dramatic role-playing activity assigns participants to a "family" with specific demographics, incomes, and bills. They must use only the assigned resources to solve common problems such as paying rent, meeting with child's teacher, talking with a pawnbroker, banker, employer, and others. The simulation helps educators understand the challenges faced by many of their students' families.

Over 500 people attended the Institute. E-surveys were used to evaluate sessions and speakers. One teacher reported, "I got a lot out of the conference this year. I can't wait to get back and use what I learned." "This is the best reaction," according to the COE staff. "A successful Institute is one that increases knowledge and improves practice."

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Jennifer Szalwinski  
Assistant Director  
Szwalswinski@fmarion.edu

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## JOINING TOGETHER TO BUILD A FOUNDATION FOR PARTNERSHIPS

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UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA  
TUSCALOOSA, AL

**T**he Parent Teacher Leadership Academy (PTLA) is a program for parents and teachers to strengthen their knowledge and abilities as leaders in their school communities. PTLA started 10 years ago as a community outreach activity and has grown over the years to include preschool, elementary, and middle school parent leaders and sessions for Hispanic parents, along with teachers at all school levels.

During the 2017–18 school year, teachers and parents in the program attended sessions together to learn ways to work as partners to support student achievement. Topics included Goal-Oriented Schools, Family and Community Partnerships; Teachers/Parents as Leaders; Collaboration and Communication; School and Board of Education Relations; and Supporting Safe, Healthy and Connected Schools/Communities. One teacher reported, “The information on action teams was so helpful. I’m looking forward to applying this at our school.”

In the past, parent and teacher groups met separately and came together for one joint session to consider a cooperative project based on NNPS guidelines linked to goals in the Alabama Continuous Improvement Plan. After reviewing the results of this structure, PTLA leaders reorganized the program with joint training of parents and teachers, with a solid foundation of research, structure, and support from NNPS.

At the start of the 2017-18 program, parents and teachers from schools in six districts met for basic training with an NNPS Facilitator. The school teams began the evening by completing a puzzle that helped define its vision for school, family, and community partnerships. They also discussed issues and needs in their own schools and communities. They began to think, together,

about a partnership project that would benefit their school, its families, and its students.

In the past couple of years, PTLA grew to 50 schools and over 200 participants. The leaders found the space needed to welcome all of the school teams for dinner and training. A 2nd grade teacher noticed a difference: “So many trainings for teachers are focused on academics. Sometimes, we forget about the relational part of teaching.” She and others wanted to strengthen feelings of mutual trust and respect between and among school, home, and community.

A Ph.D. student from China, who also is a mother of two elementary students, said that huge challenges exist for parents from other countries who are trying to raise their children in the United States. By attending PTLA, she hopes to show her children that she is working hard on their behalf. She also believes that PTLA is providing a good opportunity to promote diversity in the community and make the voices of diverse groups of parents heard by the schools.

Each project by the 50 participating school teams will focus on one goal in their own school improvement plan, linked to one of the six types of involvement in the NNPS framework. By meeting, dining, and learning together, teachers and parents in PTLA are gaining a common foundation for program development. The director of PTLA reflected, “I cannot stress enough how this session assisted in building community for our teams. From the first icebreaker to the closing poem, parents and teachers were learning and working together. Their initial discussions will propel them to build their PTLA Partnership Projects for the year’s academy.”

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*Dr. Holly Morgan*  
*Director of Community Education*  
*hgmorgan@ua.edu*

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## OUTREACH GRANTS, SCHOOL VISITS, NEWS FEATURES, AND IMOVIE SHOWCASES

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CENTER OF EXCELLENCE – FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY  
FLORENCE, SC

### ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP

**T**he Center of Excellence (COE) at Francis Marion University awards a number of small grants each year to support promising partnership practices that are planned by schools that are members of the COE local “network” and NNPS. COE supports family and community engagement activities that are likely to improve the school’s welcoming climate, school safety, or students’ academic or behavioral success in school.

Schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) may seek small grants for strong activities that are in their One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships. Their proposals must explain how the activity is expected to involve more and different families in ways that support their children’s learning, development, or safety at school or in the community. All grant recipients must present the results of their efforts at the End-of-Year Celebration at COE, and submit their practices for consideration in the annual NNPS collection of Promising Partnership Practices (PPPs).

This year, COE added another layer of support for grant recipients. Leaders conducted site visits to learn more about how the members of ATPs work to improve their partnership programs. COE awarded six grants in the 2017-18 school year. The Assistant Director of COE visited each school during the planning, implementation, or evaluation stage of their funded projects. She collected information and took videos or photos to understand how projects move successfully to completion, and how teams identify and solve challenges along the way.

COE was eager to do more than read grant applications and award funds. The site visits provided COE staff with opportunities to build positive relationships with the schools that received funding. The visits increased the schools’ accountability of how grants were

spent, and improved transparency in the ways that teamwork contributed to the implementation process. One teacher on an ATP responded, “Thank you for coming! We couldn’t have done this project without the Center’s [financial] help.” The principal of another school echoed this reaction, “We appreciate the support the Center provides.”

Another aspect of COE’s support for all districts and schools in its network is a monthly COE newsletter. The staff included the site visits to grantees as a series of articles in the newsletter. Each school that earned a COE small grant was featured, in turn, with some of the photos taken on the school visit.

In the past, COE grant recipients brought a trifold board that featured their funded project to the conference at the end of the year. This year, a more technologically advanced method—iMovie Showcase—was used to show, share, and describe the funded projects to all schools at the meeting. This was a popular feature, prompting teachers’ questions such as, “I would love to make my own, is that okay?” COE’s Director raved, “This is fantastic!”

COE—a leadership Center for partnership program development—works with districts and schools in South Carolina, linked to NNPS, to encourage more effective and equitable programs of family and community engagement. COE leaders work to meet the district leaders, parents, teachers, and principals “where they are” to help them improve their partnership programs over time. “It is our intention to be a resource, not to create more work for our partners,” agreed COE leaders, “and we are enriched by celebrating our schools’ good ideas!”

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*Jennifer Szalwinski*  
Assistant Director  
[Szwalswinski@fmarion.edu](mailto:Szwalswinski@fmarion.edu)

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## SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS—CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION

PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS IRELAND  
DUBLIN, IRELAND

**A**t Partnership Schools Ireland (PSI) one thing was perfectly clear: We need the voice of students on schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs), even at the primary school level. Public policy in Ireland recognizes that students have the biggest stake in their education. Therefore, they must have a say in what is planned and implemented to increase their success in school.

PSI developed its professional development workshops for school-based teams with content that is consistent with the main structures and processes of NNPS: create a team; write a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships, use the Framework of Six Types of Involvement to vary the activities in the plan; implement the plan; and evaluate the quality of activities and progress of the program. PSI also wanted to include student representatives in the ATP training along with the other partners— parents, teachers, the principal or director, and community members.

This also is the philosophy of the National Parents Councils Primary (NPC): to provide children with opportunities to have a voice in their school and in their own education. As one parent reported, “At first, it was challenging to arrange for children’s representation, but after the first year it became easier and we could see how the goals were benefitting the children.”

An advisory group and PSI-ATP coordinator worked together to adapt the team training materials to include children on the ATP from the outset. The coordinator recruited schools to the PSI network and prepared workshop leaders to conduct the ATP training, including students.

Including children as equal members of the ATP can make a significant difference in ensuring that planned activities are feasible and acceptable. Children sometimes know more than adults about what is required to help all students improve behavior on the playground or interpersonal relationships at break time. If

facilitated and involved in identifying goals for student success and actions to meet these goals, children may suggest simple ideas and effective solutions that adults have not considered. As one child on an ATP said, “We love ATP! It has given us a chance to make our school more welcoming, take responsibility for our own playground games, enjoy putting on shows, and sharing our work with older people.”

All mainstream primary, infant, and special education schools across Ireland were informed of PSI services and benefits. For primary (elementary) schools, PSI requires at least 4 children, aged 10-13, on each school’s ATP.

The NPC National Conference in 2018 focused on hearing the voice of the child. At the conference, children and teachers from a PSI Partnership School presented their experiences as an active ATP. They highlighted the important lens through which students see educational services that affect them. ATPs have learned to review agenda items in a student-friendly manner to encourage students’ participation in the ATP training and ATP meetings.

Having well-functioning ATPs (including children) has had positive results. Some Partnership Schools reported higher STEM scores after their ATPs set academic goals for student success. Other schools reported that students reached attendance and behavioral goals (e.g., self-confidence and social skills). In one school, children worked with a teacher to design a visual presentation of math so that parents would understand. The principal reported, “Our ATP provided the organization and structure for everyone to work together on goals in our action plan for the year. We have been delighted with the results. . . . This program has really made a difference for the children at the school.”

*Liam McPherson*  
PSI Coordinator  
*psi@npc.ie*

ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP

## SUPPORTING MAISONDIEU MINDS TOGETHER

PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS SCOTLAND  
EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

**P**artnership Schools Scotland (PSS) is developing and scaling up its network of schools that implement goal-linked programs of family and community engagement. One PSS site, Maisondieu Primary School, with over 400 students, is in its 3rd year of work with PSS. The high school in the area identified students' mental health and well-being as an issue of importance. Maisondieu Primary saw that students' well-being is a continuous condition that is worthy of attention starting in the early grades. The school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) selected students' well-being as one of its goals for school, family, and community partnerships.

Maisondieu Minds Together illustrates how PSS supports the goals and activities of schools in Scotland's growing partnership network. PSS helps each school create its ATP, get basic training in teamwork and program planning, and write plans for engaging parents and the community with students to reach specific goals. PSS also meets with each ATP and learns how its resources may assist with particular projects. At Maisondieu, PSS provided posters and other resources to publicize the school's activities on well-being, and shared information on the project on the PSS website and in its newsletter. PSS also arranged for the Scottish Education Minister to visit Maisondieu, which led to coverage in the local media.

The ATP at Maisondieu planned activities to raise awareness and equip parents with strategies to support their children's well-being. Parents were surveyed about topics they wanted to explore to ensure their children's positive development and success in school. From these data, the ATP planned an evening on children's mental health for parents, teachers, and community partners. Parents watched the film *Resilience*—an internationally acclaimed documentary on preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Parents and teachers discussed ways to minimize ACEs and help students address

childhood challenges with support from home, school, and community.

Parents learned about school services that contribute to students' well-being, and were given the name of a contact person at school to call if they wanted advice to help their children address behavioral challenges. The ATP wanted all parents to know that Maisondieu is an "Ask Once, Get Help" school. Parents also learned of community services that promote children's well-being. One of the school's business partners noted, "Healthy children develop healthy communities, which in turn support a community's economic well-being." PSS is doing guiding schools to make these connections.

A staff policy and library on children's well-being was established. As one staff member shared, "Working as a team with parents, school staff, and mental health professionals has allowed us to make important progress on children's well-being, and to include partners far beyond our school walls. We are now a much more open and inclusive school community."

Support from PSS helped Maisondieu focus clearly on one of its goals for student success. PSS customizes support for each school in the Partnership Schools Scotland network. PSS leaders learn about each ATP's plans and goals for students. Then, PSS offers its organizational skills and resources to help each school strengthen family and community engagement that contributes to student success. In addition, PSS helps schools understand the importance of evaluating the quality of their plans, activities, and programs. One PSS leader explained, "Some schools do not evaluate the impact of their family and community engagement activities. We are helping ATPs use an evaluation tool as part of the on-going planning process."

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*Eleanor Coner*  
Partnership Development Officer  
*Eleanor@connect.scot*

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## REGIONAL PARENT LIAISON CAPACITY-BUILDING INITIATIVE

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SOUTH CAROLINA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
COLUMBIA, SC

The South Carolina Department of Education follows a formal policy (Code of Law) to coordinate statewide initiatives that support school and district plans and programs of parental involvement. Field observations coupled with the results of a statewide needs assessment of school districts revealed that there were gaps in the guidance provided to Parent Liaisons about their roles and responsibilities. Working together, the South Carolina School Improvement Council (SC-SIC), which is located at the University of SC's College of Education, and the SC-SDE's Office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) developed the Regional Parent Liaison Capacity-Building Initiative.

The goals of this Initiative were to: promote the use of research-based and best practices to increase the effectiveness of Parent Liaisons; support the growth of a state network of Parent Liaisons; increase consensus in SC on core principles of family engagement; Elevate the status of Parent Liaisons in schools.

FACE and SC-SIC shared responsibility for the project in the 2017-18 school year. Both offices conducted outreach activities with districts and schools. The two groups met regularly over several months to analyze the needs assessment data and identify how best to respond to the needs identified. The collaborating leaders agreed on the format, content, and materials for the initiative.

The Parent Liaison Capacity-Building Initiative was launched in the fall of 2017 with a half-day introductory training session (Phase I) in 4 cities in SC. A second half-day training session was conducted in 4 cities in the spring (Phase II). Key topics in the fall were (1) defining the role of the Parent Liaison, (2) defining family engagement, (3) developing trusting relationships and welcoming schools, and (4) introducing Epstein's Six Types of Involvement and the NNPS model for programs of partnership at the school level.

These topics were reviewed and revised in the spring: (1) current research addressing the different types of family engagement, (2) the dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships, and (3) reviewing components of programs that illustrate elements of the dual-capacity framework. Both series provided opportunities for relationship-building, collaborative learning, and hands-on exercises for participants to see how the concepts apply in their own schools.

Most participants in the sessions were Parent Liaisons and Title I Coordinators from schools and districts in the state, but some were representatives from other state offices, organizations, and communities. Some participants were members of their School Improvement Councils and school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). One Title I Coordinator observed, "I found it helpful to have a clear definition of family engagement." A district-level behavior specialist said that as a result of the sessions, "I will look at partnering with parents differently."

The Initiative aimed to address schools' questions about the roles and responsibilities of Parent Liaisons, and how they served the families and educators. In the first year, 20 district leaders and 112 teachers, administrators, and school staff came for training. Evaluations indicated that the attendees increased their understanding of Parent Liaisons' work and school plans for good partnerships. The state leaders will review and revise this Initiative to ensure that Parent Liaisons throughout the state are prepared to help their schools strengthen programs of family and community engagement for student success.

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*Yolandé Anderson*  
*Director, Office of Family and*  
*Community Engagement*  
*yanderson@ed.sc.gov*

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