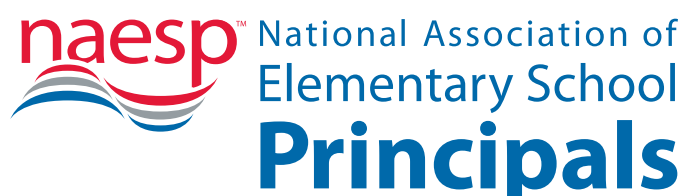

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National Association of Elementary School Principals

1615 Duke Street

Alexandria VA 22314

Phone: 800-38-NAESP

Fax: 800-39-NAESP

E-mail: naesp@naesp.org

Web site: www.naesp.org

The mission of the National Association of Elementary School Principals is to lead in the advocacy and support for elementary- and middle-level principals and other education leaders in their commitment to all children. Over 30,000 members of NAESP provide administrative and instructional leadership for public and private elementary and middle schools throughout the United States, Canada and overseas. Founded in 1921, NAESP is an independent professional association with its own headquarters building in Alexandria, Virginia. Through national and regional meetings, award-winning publications, and joint efforts with its 50 state affiliates, NAESP is a strong advocate for both its members and for the 33 million American children enrolled in pre-school, kindergarten and grades 1 through 8.

Since 1921, NAESP has provided its members with high-impact resources, publications and professional development, and has served as a legislative advocate for elementary- and middle-level principals. To join, contact the NAESP Member Service Center toll-free at 800-386-2377 or membership@naesp.org

To learn more about the Sharing the Dream Grant Program and to apply for a grant, call 800-386-2377 or visit <http://www.naesp.org/MetLifeShareDream.aspx>

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INTRODUCTION

Exchanging Ideas, Changing Lives

Principals, like world leaders, are accountable for the education, safety, well-being and future prospects of those in their charge -- a responsibility made more complex by unstable economies, global conflict and shifting student populations that require educators to be forward-thinking, proactive and culturally responsive.

Effective 21st century leaders, whether they head a school or nation, recognize the value of sharing alternate perspectives, ideas and solutions with others to reach mutually-favorable outcomes. When educators hold dialogue with parents, community members and peers to tackle school challenges, they build learning communities on two planes: in their own schools and neighborhoods; and on a national scale with a network of principals who share the same goals.

“Isolation is the antithesis of a learning community.” This is one of the conclusions of the 2008 NAESP publication *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do*. “Educators in an effective learning community recognize that they must work together to achieve their shared vision of learning for all. They create collaborative structures to support them as they share ideas, materials, lesson plans and strategies. They talk about what’s working—and what isn’t.”

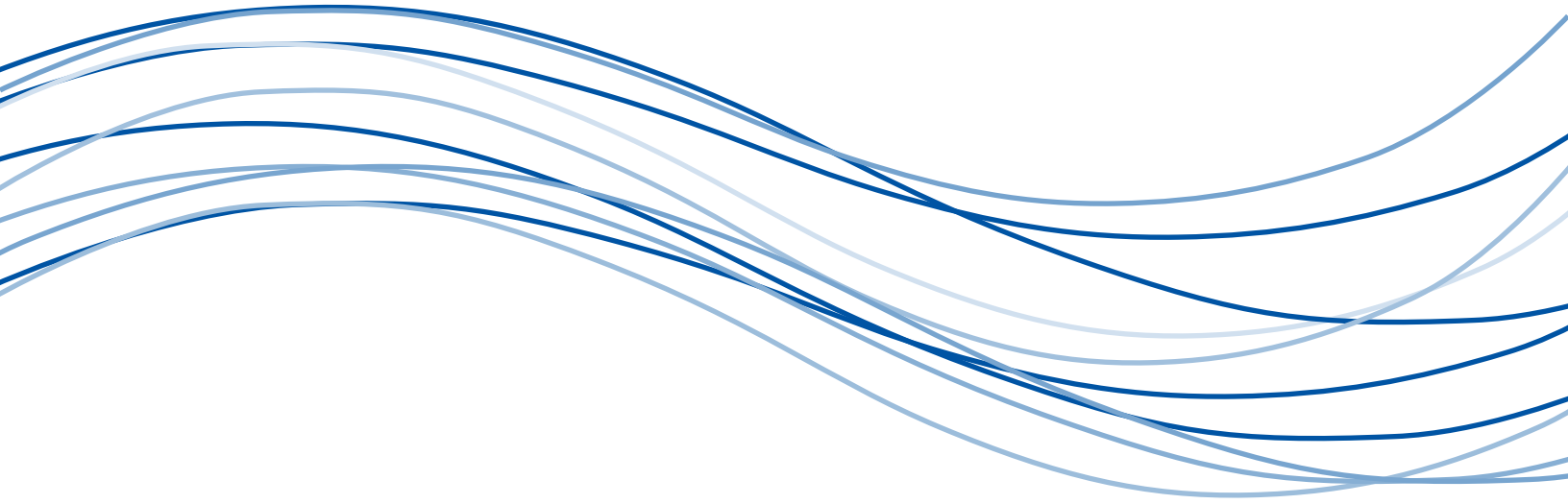
Since 2004, *Sharing the Dream* has supported a strong learning community of principals who have used innovative approaches to build school-community partnerships and to improve student learning. This national network of principals has shared successes and challenges, inspiring countless others to launch similar projects in their own schools. For this 5th edition of *Spotlight on Best Practices*, we feature the work of our 2008-2009 grantees who implemented a diversity of projects, in a wide range of subject areas.

Today’s school principals cannot be leaders of hermit kingdoms, isolated and cut off from the communities they serve. They must be facilitators—team leaders—who bring together parents, teachers, business leaders, institutes of higher learning, civic groups and other partners to exchange ideas to address crucial needs in school.

Sharing the Dream encourages principals to become national leaders, as well as civic leaders: working collectively to steer the future of American education; improving learning conditions in schools across the country, not just in their own neighborhoods; and making a difference in student performance and quality of life for children and their families across the United States.

BEST PRACTICES:

Lessons From the Field



The publication *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do* describes an effective learning community as having a “culture of collaboration” where educators trade strategies, resources and ideas to achieve their collective purpose.

Since 2004, *Sharing the Dream* has advanced the exchange of ideas: enabling principals to test out innovative community engagement projects in their schools; and sharing their successes, challenges and ideas with educators nationwide.

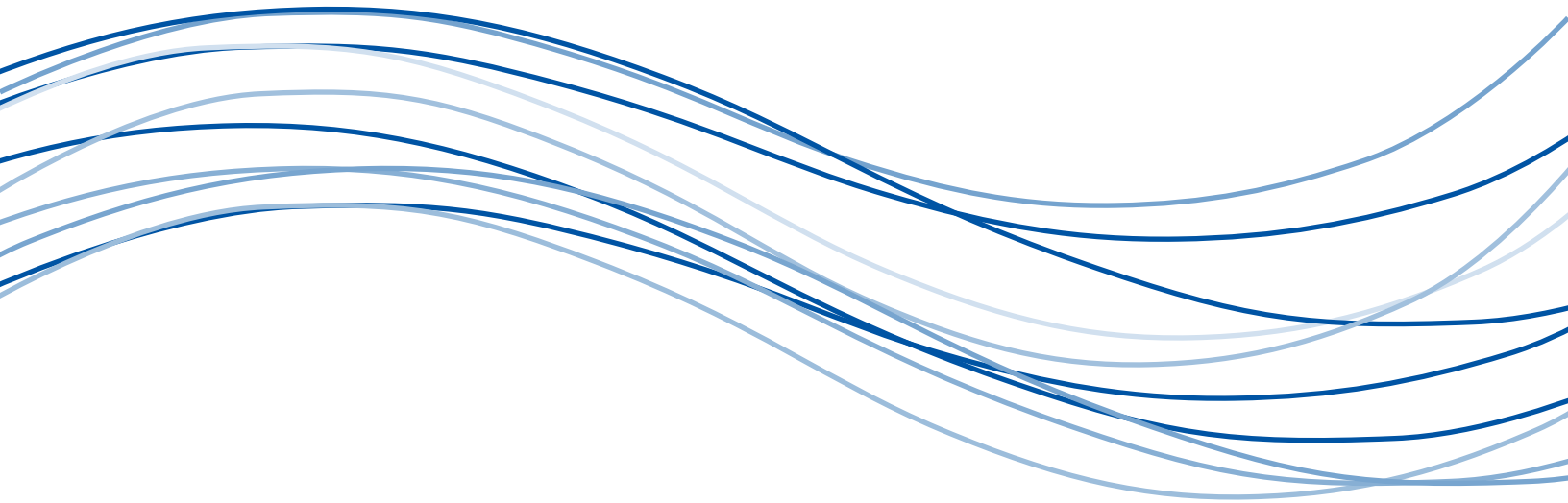
In 2008-2009, 30 principals launched projects with the goal of increasing parental and community involvement. Their stories generated a wealth of strategies, tips and action steps for other educators to try in their own schools. Whether starting a new project or reflecting on an existing one, these ideas can be adapted to meet local needs.



- **Provide child care, meals and transportation.** Attending school functions can be a hardship for parents with second jobs and young children. Make it easier on families by arranging carpools, offering childcare and serving food.
- **Engage in a community service project.** Relationships naturally develop when people work together toward a common, altruistic goal. Bonus: partnering with one community group frequently leads to more partnerships.
- **Ride school buses.** Bus transportation to and from events provides families and teachers with the opportunity to socialize in a fun, informal setting, while giving parents a first-hand understanding of their children’s school experiences.
- **Include a student component at parent-focused events.** Parents are more likely to attend workshops and meetings if a student performance (e.g., a concert or theatrical production) is included in the program.
- **Establish weekly “office hours” with an interpreter present.** Parents whose first language is not English will feel more comfortable dropping-in to ask questions and express concerns with the aid of a translator. Team up with high school advanced-language classes for volunteers.

-
- **Train staff how to use classroom volunteers effectively.** Helpers should be working where they are most needed (e.g., reading to students, instead of decorating bulletin boards).
 - **Piggyback programming on historically well-attended events.** Maximize turnout by scheduling workshops and meetings to precede or follow parent-teacher conferences or open houses. Many parents make child care arrangements on these days and may be able to arrive early or stay late.
 - **Recruit parents as “event chairs.”** Ask parents to sign up to run a school event—like a health fair, game show or concert—and recruit families they know to help.
 - **Vary days and times of events.** Offer parents options by scheduling a range of days and times. Or, run the same meeting twice; in the morning and after school; or on a weeknight and weekend afternoon.
 - **“Adopt” a school.** Partner with a school in a disadvantaged area—in the same district or in a foreign country—to share resources, build connections between students and foster social compassion and activism.
 - **Welcome whole families.** Open events to everyone in the family, from younger siblings to grandparents, and involve them in activities.
 - **Go off-site.** Show parents how an ordinary trip to the grocery store can support learning at home by holding math scavenger hunts and health and nutrition workshops in neighborhood markets or department stores.
 - **Invite social service organizations to events.** Make sure that families are connected to the health and human services they need by inviting local aid groups to take part in meetings.
 - **Re-tool longstanding events to meet changing demographics.** Is the current kindergarten readiness program or open house model adequately meeting families’ needs? If not, it is time for a change.

PROFILES OF BEST PRACTICES



I feel good every time I am with my student because I know I am having a positive impact on her life.
Eagle's Nest volunteer

Dr. Barbara Shirley, Principal

Alta Vista Elementary School
Sarasota, Florida

Student Enrollment: 1371
Grades: Pre-K-5



LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- School-based mentoring programs can boost children's learning and self-worth.
- Businesses are an untapped resource for volunteers. Some companies release employees for part of the day to engage in community service activities
- Volunteers who feel welcomed, valued and supported become invested in the school and in the education and wellbeing of "their kids."

NURTURING STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS

As principal of a school with a substantial population of students from low-income homes, Barbara Shirley faced the stark reality that many Alta Vista parents could not provide the at-home learning support their children needed because they were struggling just to make ends meet. So, she and volunteer coordinator Lisa Thole appealed to the Sarasota community for help, recruiting volunteers to meet with students one-on-one during school hours for tutoring in math and reading.

Inspired by the phrase “If we build it, they will come,” Shirley envisioned a dedicated room in the school—a warm, safe, nurturing space—where students and mentors could meet. Here, the volunteers were welcomed and received the support and training they needed to work with at-risk students. And, this was where the parents who wanted to become more involved in their children’s education could learn how to become coaches. Shirley’s idea became the Eagle’s Nest Volunteer Center.

IMPLEMENTATION

To get the Center up and running, Thole recruited more than 100 volunteers from different sectors of the community: parents, retired persons, high school students and working adults whose employers released them during the day to engage in service activities. Volunteers were taught how to use instructional materials; they attended workshops to gain insight into the home lives of the children they served; and they were shown strategies for becoming more effective mentors. *Dream* funds paid for supplies, educational materials and equipment.

Monday through Friday, from 8:30 to 3:15, the Eagle’s Nest Volunteer Center became a hub of activity. Students struggling with schoolwork were identified by their teachers and referred to the Center, where they were matched with a volunteer and received extra help in reading, mathematics, study skills and test preparation. Principal Shirley reports: “Throughout the year, attendance at the Volunteer Center was fluid as students gained skills and were successful and other students needed support.”

RESULTS

Two-hundred and fifty children in grades K–5 attended the Center twice a week. Students commented, “I love the Volunteer Center; it’s really fun to go there,” and “My volunteer is fun and makes me smile.” Academically, students made gains in reading fluency and writing competence. Seventy percent of participants in grades 2–4 showed growth on the Spring Scholastic Reading Inventory. Since opening, the Center has received media attention and numerous awards, including a PTA Parent Involvement Award.

Looking back on the year, Shirley was not sure who got more out of the program: students or volunteers. One volunteer, a staffer with the Sarasota Herald-Tribune newspaper, said, “I got hooked on mentoring because spending an hour once a week with two first-graders reminded me how important children are and how simple it can be for adults to help motivate them.” As the Eagle’s Nest volunteers built relationships with students, they saw needs they could fill. They organized a jacket fund to provide children with cold-weather wear, and reached out to their professional networks during a book drive, collecting four times the number of books the school had anticipated.

NEXT STEPS

Plans are in place to continue the Eagle’s Nest Volunteer Center indefinitely. Recruitment efforts have been stepped up, and the team analyzes and refines the Center’s services on a regular basis, tailoring instruction to meet current students’ needs. Inside the district and beyond, the program has become a model to replicate. Schools have approached the Eagle’s Nest team for ideas and guidance on starting their own centers. “It’s been a wonderful opportunity to share our success and experience and support other schools in their quest to help students achieve,” Shirley said.

RESOURCES

Corporation for National and Community Service
AmeriCorps and Senior Corps
www.nationalservice.gov

MENTOR

Provides the support and tools that mentoring organizations need to effectively serve young people in their communities.

www.Mentoring.org

Payne, Ruby E. *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. aha! Process, Inc., 2005.

My vision for the future is that many of our current Latino student-leaders will become teachers, administrators and instructional assistants in our schools, providing positive examples of success to our next generation of students.

Chris Pearson, Principal

Chris Pearson, Principal

Allen Elementary School
Bow, Washington

Student Enrollment: 479
Grades: K-8



LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Communicating the purpose of meetings and giving parents clear reasons why they should attend can increase participation.
- Inviting health and social service agencies to participate in school events connects families with the services they need, strengthens relationships with the community and may lead to additional funding.
- Involving younger students in high school college-preparatory clubs through mentorship can provide support, direction and a sense of belonging as children progress through the upper grades.

MEETING STUDENTS WHERE THEY LIVE

For migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families, decisions about where to move are ultimately based on where the work is, not on the quality of neighborhood schools. Even so, migrant parents, like all parents, recognize the value of education and see it as a path to a better life. For schools like Allen Elementary, near a subsidized housing development for migrant families, it can be a challenge to educate children who must overcome disruptions in education, economic hardship and limited English proficiency to learn.

Chris Pearson's goal as principal was to improve migrant students' achievement and, most of all, to encourage them to continue their education through the teen years — when many migrant children drop out of high school to work alongside their parents. Pearson knew he had to involve parents in this long-range endeavor, so he came up with a two-part plan: individualized tutoring for students to take place in the Raspberry Ridge housing complex where many students lived; and bilingual family nights for parents.

IMPLEMENTATION

Sharing the Dream funds supported twice-weekly tutoring sessions held in the complex's community room. Two teachers were on-site: helping students with homework, meeting one-on-one with parents and supervising volunteer tutors.

Pearson and his team enlisted the help of bilingual Hispanic students from the local high school, many of whom were involved in college preparedness programs like Latinos in Action and AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination). The teens were rewarded with more than just community service credits; "They have proven to be powerful role models for our younger students," Pearson says.

Along with the after-school program, *Dream* funds allowed Pearson to hold two bilingual parent nights—the first ever for the district. These prepared Spanish-speaking families for parent-teacher conferences, provided tips for helping children with schoolwork, and featured a panel of students from Latinos in Action who shared with parents what it takes to be successful in school. Representatives from local health and human aid organizations also were on hand to explain their services and answer questions.



RESULTS

All six schools in the district and 15 community organizations participated in one or both parent nights. An average of 75 parents attended each event. Parents seemed to feel more confident, asking questions and discussing concerns with teachers afterwards.

Twenty-one students regularly attended the after-school sessions, and grades improved in math and language arts. One student reported zero reading minutes at home in October and 350 in November. Teachers saw positive gains in study skills, completion of assignments, and overall attitude toward school. “Yessenia has improved confidence in math computation and problem solving,” her teacher said. “She is also more out-going and confident, willing to volunteer answers.”

Pearson is proud to note that several students from the Raspberry Ridge After-School Program have taken on leadership roles in the school, even making presentations to school board members.

NEXT STEPS

As a new initiative, the parent nights were successful, but attendance was not as high as Pearson would have liked. “I think there were some parents who were not clear about why they should attend,” he admits. “As a school and district, we can do a better job of getting information out to families so that they are aware of the purpose of these events.” He also believes that a shared meal and student performances will boost attendance, and plans to incorporate both of these in future parent nights.

Plans have been made to take the Raspberry Ridge After-School Program to the next level. Pearson is exploring funding options to expand the program to serve all children living in the housing complex, including pre-K students. In 2008-2009, the tutoring team was able to come up with a focused plan for delivering instruction; they will continue to refine that plan as the program develops. They also will encourage migrant students to get involved in AVID and Latinos in Action. By aligning students with these programs now, Pearson hopes to see “increased enrollment of our Hispanic/migrant students in college prep classes as juniors and seniors.”

RESOURCES

AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination)

An in-school academic support program for grades 4–12 that prepares students for college eligibility and success.

www.AVIDonline.org

Latinos in Action

www.LatinosinAction.org

ASPIRA

A national organization dedicated exclusively to developing the educational and leadership capacity of Hispanic youth.

www.ASPIRA.org

Atkin, S. Beth. *Voices from the Field: Children of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories*. Little, Brown and Company, 2000.

Jimenez, Francisco. *The Circuit*. Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 1999.

Students from both Amerman and Roberto Clemente felt a sense of accomplishment and a belief that kids are just kids.

Stephen A. Anderson, Principal

Stephen A. Anderson, Principal

Amerman Elementary School
Northville, Michigan

Student Enrollment: 533
Grades: K-5



LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Getting children involved in humanitarian works in their neighborhood introduces them to the concept of global responsibility.
- Pairing up with another school in the district is a great way to share ideas, resources and limited materials.
- Small projects often take on a life of their own. Be flexible and seize the momentum.

AROUND THE CORNER, AROUND THE WORLD

A goal of Northville school district is to graduate world-class citizens who will become quality contributors in their communities and beyond. In past years, educators at Amerman Elementary have reached out to schools as far away as Afghanistan and Japan, connecting children and exposing them to diverse customs and languages. Amerman's students have learned that, despite cultural differences, kids are essentially just kids. Principal Stephen Anderson believes that same lesson can be taught by partnering with a school just around the corner.

He and his team approached the staff at Detroit's Roberto Clemente Learning Academy—where 95 percent of students are Latino and many students speak Spanish as their first language—to propose a partnership. Initially, the goal was for 4th graders at both schools to expand their understanding of what it means to be a community while learning math and science concepts together in a fun team-building activity called the Solar Sprint. But the program blossomed into more when teachers and principals began to share resources and time—and meals out—and students at both schools joined forces to feed hungry children around the world.

IMPLEMENTATION

Twelve LEGO E-Lab kits were purchased with *Dream* funds for the 4th grade classes at Roberto Clemente so that they could participate in a Solar Sprint competition at Amerman in June. Working in teams, students designed, built, tested and raced solar cars; in the process they learned about simple machines, renewable energy, speed and efficiency ratios, and other concepts. On the day of the race, engineering students from the University of Michigan Solar Race Team came to display their race car designs and interact with students.

While students worked on their solar cars, they also engaged in community service projects. Amerman students and their families collected and donated books—and much-needed sports equipment—to Roberto Clemente Learning Academy. Children from both schools packaged 15,000 meal kits to support Kids Against Hunger, a humanitarian food-aid organization. Board of education members and the school superintendent were in attendance at the event to show their support.



RESULTS

Fourth-graders from both schools applied math and science concepts and raced their cars in a friendly competition for a successful Solar Sprint. But the alliance that started with a math-science project went beyond what organizers had anticipated. Amerman students organized a book drive for Roberto Clemente and took part in a collaborative service project with their new friends at the Detroit school. And principals and teachers from the two schools became friends, sharing resources and ideas and helping out at one another's school events. The partnership was acknowledged by a National PTA's Family-School Partnership Award of Merit.

NEXT STEPS

Pearson and his team plan to continue their relationship with Roberto Clemente. They have applied for a grant to purchase computer equipment that will allow staff at the two schools to communicate more easily using video conferencing.

RESOURCES

Kids Against Hunger
www.kidsagainsthunger.org

LEGO eLab
www.LEGO.com/education

90.3 percent of our students come from low income homes but that didn't stop them from helping to feed their neighbors.

Colleen Lennon, Principal

Colleen Lennon, Principal

Emily G. Wetherbee School
Lawrence, Massachusetts

Student Enrollment: 584
Grades: K-8



LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Field work enhances classroom learning.
- Letting students take the lead on complex projects allows them to practice long-range planning and team-building skills.
- Showing students—especially those with limited resources—that they can personally affect change in their community is a powerful, uplifting lesson that can translate to academic success.

GETTING OUT FROM BEHIND THE DESK

Colleen Lennon's school is ranked in the bottom fourth of all public elementary schools in Massachusetts. Most of her students speak Spanish as their first language. Ninety percent qualify for free or reduced lunch. Lennon could have reached out to the community for help. Instead, she asked students, who had very little to give, to help others.

She and writing coach Francine Baggett came up with an idea to combine writing and service learning—not only to fulfill a 6th-grade district writing requirement and sharpen students' writing skills, -- but to inspire children to make a difference in their community. Lennon knew that being in service to others could potentially be an empowering, life-changing experience, and that it could lift up her students. The project, called *Giving Back to Our Community*, would “allow our 6th-graders to get out from behind their desks and become more involved in their community.”

IMPLEMENTATION

With the support of a *Sharing the Dream* grant, three classes of 6th-graders explored three facilities in the community—a nursing home, homeless shelter, and an animal shelter—and wrote reports about them. For each facility, students investigated its purpose, whom it served, its role in the community and its critical needs. At the homeless shelter, students toured the building, interacted with clients, and then arranged for a guest speaker to come to Wetherbee to update the entire school about shortages at the local food pantry. Students wrote letters home and designed hallway posters, asking for donations of goods.

Another class supported the local animal shelter, organizing a drive to collect much-needed pet food and supplies. A third class visited a nursing home four times through the year, bringing gifts, participating in a Cinco de Mayo celebration and writing letters to residents. “Some residents never have visitors,” Lennon says, “and our interaction with them, the activities director said, was better than any medicine or therapy they could receive.”



RESULTS

By means of heartfelt and well-crafted letters, the 6th-graders who researched the Lazarus House homeless shelter collected hundreds of canned goods for the food pantry. Wetherbee families gave just as generously to the animal shelter. “You can imagine how proud the students were when they arrived by bus at the shelter with boxes and bags full of donated items,” Lennon said.

Lennon is convinced that the *Giving Back to Our Community* impacted her students in profound, immeasurable ways. Despite hardships in their own lives, they gave of themselves, reaching out to others in need and were rewarded with a sense of accomplishment and pride. “Not only did our students gain so much by this project but our community benefited tremendously as well,” Lennon said. “These students made a difference in the lives of others.”

NEXT STEPS

After a successful pilot year, *Giving Back to Our Community* has been integrated into the 6th grade language arts course of study at Wetherbee. Lennon and Baggett plan to partner with additional community organizations and involve more students and families in the program in the future.

RESOURCES

Kids Can Make a Difference

Advocates for innovative, community-based solutions to hunger and poverty.

www.kidscanmakeadifference.org

Learn and Serve

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

www.servicelearning.org

I attended the [Family, Film and Food Night] event due to my personal situation and to show my daughter that she is not the only one living in a divorced home.

Parent participant

Melanie Raneri Woods, Principal

PS 29/The John Herrigan School
Brooklyn, New York

Student Enrollment: 677
Grades: Pre-K–5



LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Working together to set a school-wide goal for the year keeps everyone invested, focused and on track.
- For family functions, offering a blend of activities—role play, learning centers, discussion, storytelling—keeps the audience interested and on-task no matter their age.
- Scheduling a team meeting after major events, when everyone is fired-up, to debrief and brainstorm new ideas will keep momentum going.

FAMILIES COME IN ALL SHAPES

The John Harrigan School/PS 29 in Brooklyn, New York, is fortunate to have a strong base of involved parents, but Principal Melanie Raneri Woods was concerned that glaring socioeconomic disparities and cultural differences in the neighborhood were causing division among students. At first, she considered launching a school-wide diversity program, celebrating the countries of origin of PS 29 families. But, would a superficial study of far-off nations and a sampling of ethnic foods really teach students to respect and understand each other?



After careful reflection, Raneri Woods decided to narrow her focus to *family*—a concept that even kindergartners could relate to personally. The idea was to embark on an intense, year-long exploration of the question: “what do families look like?” She hoped that in sharing cultural backgrounds, traditions, and family structures, children—and their parents—would gain insight into the ways in which American families are different and the same.

IMPLEMENTATION

PS 29’s Diversity Committee and the PTA was on-board when school started, organizing school-wide activities, such as an “I Am From/We Are From” poetry project and a multicultural book exchange. The team used the *Sharing the Dream* grant to host a culminating Family, Film and Food Night, which brought parents, children, teachers and staff together for an evening of discussion and reflection about what makes a family.

Families viewed a 36-minute documentary called “That’s a Family,” an award-winning film designed to help children see and understand many of the different shapes that families take today. A panel discussion about families followed, including a single parent with an adopted child and a multiracial family. Afterwards, the audience broke into small groups led by facilitators, and they shared stories about their own families and discussed the film.

For the meal portion of the program, attendees participated in two “cooking” activities: working together to make a seven-layer dip and mixing toppings for ice cream sundaes. Raneri Woods and her team chose the menu to demonstrate the concept of diversity -- “showing how different ingredients layered together can make a delicious whole.”

RESULTS

One hundred people attended PS 29's first Family, Film and Food night. More important than the numbers were the reactions of parents and children to the film and supporting activities.

"I was moved to hear from PS 29 families about their own families—and what shape they take," said one parent. Another observed, "My daughter was adopted when she was 10 days old. After the event, on the way home, she looked at me and said, 'Mom, I didn't know there were so many other children just like me.' Thank you for hosting this event. It was a remarkable experience."

The Family, Film and Fun Night surpassed all of Raneri Woods's expectations, making an already close-knit school community even closer.

NEXT STEPS

Looking ahead, Raneri Woods and her team plan to add a grade-level-appropriate bullying component to their program to maintain the momentum and open dialogue begun in 2008-2009 with the Family, Film and Fun Night.

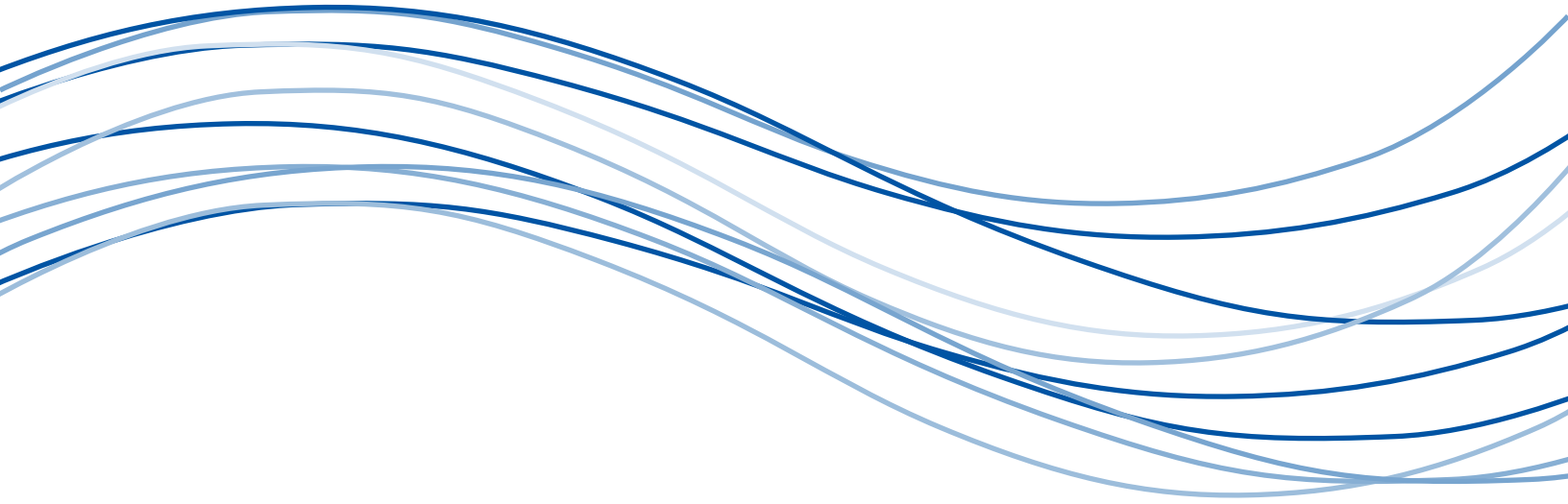
RESOURCES

That's A Family!
www.groundspark.org

Teaching Tolerance
www.tolerance.org

National Association for Multicultural Education
www.NAME.org

SNAPSHOTS OF BEST PRACTICES



Becky Escamilla, Principal

Whittier International Elementary
School
Boulder, Colorado

Student Enrollment: 347
Grades: K–5

As Whittier International Elementary School’s population of Hispanic students approached 30 percent, Principal Becky Escamilla realized that perennial events, like kindergarten orientation and even the annual sock hop, were now inadequate to meet the needs of a changing neighborhood. With a *Sharing the Dream* grant, she re-imagined and retooled these events to make them more welcoming and accessible to diverse families.

Escamilla knew that lack of transportation and child care kept some families from attending Whittier’s twice-yearly family literacy nights. So, she offered bus tickets and on-site babysitting to those in need. For kindergarten orientation, a panel session featuring bilingual parents was added, and interpreters were made available afterwards for parents to ask questions and voice concerns. Whittier turned its annual sock hop into a “fiesta” with Latino-influenced food and music. And, the school held its first-ever Heritage Night, an outdoor fair showcasing foods, handicrafts, dress and performances reflecting different cultures. To express her willingness to listen to parents, Escamilla established weekly “office hours” during which she met with parents with a translator present.

After fine-tuning Whittier’s annual events, Escamilla saw a marked increase in the number of Hispanic families who participated. More families attended the literacy events compared with the previous year—50 more in the fall, 15 in the spring. Escamilla and her team plan to build on these successes by launching reading clubs in Spanish and English and by providing translation services at parent-teacher meetings.

Christine Hinds, Principal

Jennie Reed Elementary School
Tacoma, Washington

Student Enrollment: 480
Grades: Pre-K–5

Principal Christine Hinds’s vision for Jennie Read Elementary was for it to be a center of growth and learning, not only for students but for their families. She believed that by offering parents classes in the same building where their children learned, parents would feel more comfortable there and grow to become partners in learning with their children. Children, too, would come to understand that learning was a lifelong enterprise.

Jennie Reed partnered with Tacoma Community College (TCC) to offer twice-weekly English conversation classes to Spanish-speaking parents. Eighteen parents regularly attended the 90-minute classes, facilitated by two trained TCC volunteers. For many parents, attendance was only possible because of no-cost child care provided through the *Dream* grant. Grant funds also made it possible for a translator to be present at evening *Familia* workshops, where topics included: navigating district and school forms; Spanish parents raising English readers; dealing with bullies; and preparing for middle school.

Hinds observed that as parents became more confident speaking English, and spent more time on campus, they seemed more comfortable entering the school building and approaching teachers and staff. The most heartfelt lesson for Hinds and her team was “the thirst that many of our Spanish-speaking parents have for opportunities to practice speaking English in a positive, non-threatening environment.” Jennie Reed is continuing their partnership with TCC, expanding the program to serve parents who speak Tagalog and Vietnamese.

Mark Proffitt, Principal

Jayhawk Elementary School
Mound City, Kansas

Student Enrollment: 257
Grades: Pre-K–6

Mark Proffitt wanted to create a more caring and supportive school environment where parents felt called to share in the success of all students. Inspired by Tom Rath’s bestselling book *How Full is Your Bucket* and its message of positive reinforcement, he purchased multiple copies of the book to share among parents, challenging them to “fill children’s buckets” by serving as volunteer tutors in Jayhawk’s Center for Assessment and Remediation of Reading Difficulties (CARRD).

To introduce parents to the CARRD and recruit tutors, Proffitt used *Dream* funds to present two informational meetings. A total of 50 parents attended, four of whom signed up to tutor students. The results of the CARRD program were promising, as students who started the year reading at the kindergarten level had progressed to the first grade level by the end. Although Proffitt would have liked to have seen more parents volunteer, he was encouraged by an increased level of interest in CARRD. Several parents inquired about tutoring for their children, and some stopped by the Center to see what it was all about. Overall, more parents than usual were interested in school initiatives and attended more parent-teacher meetings -- an upshot which Proffitt attributes to the CARRD meetings.

Proffitt is gratified that the current group of volunteers are continuing for another year. For the future, he and his team plan to aggressively recruit more volunteers, expand the CARRD Center’s hours of operation, and refine tutor training to include a unit on behavior management strategies.

Anna B. James, Principal

Integrated Day Charter School
Norwich, Connecticut

Student Enrollment: 330
Grades: Pre-K–8

As principal of a charter school where admission is decided by lottery, Anna B. James was troubled by low diversity among applicants to the school. The numbers convinced her that non-English-speaking and low-income families in the district did not know enough about their educational options or about Integrated Day to make a decision to apply there. With a *Dream* grant, James launched a marketing campaign to introduce the school to a broader and more diverse constituency of parents.

To start, James contacted African-American, Asian and Latino civic leaders to invite families in their communities to learn more about Integrated Day. She hosted monthly Directors' Coffees to provide parents with an overview of the school's philosophy of teaching. Parents received information about how to seek enrollment, and *Yardsticks* pamphlets, produced by the Northeast Foundation for Children (www.responsiveclassroom.org)—and purchased with a *Sharing the Dream* grant—to help them understand children's developmental stages by age. The grant also supported an evening presentation made by students on topics of colonialism, slavery and racism, as well as a legislative breakfast, organized by students, during which political leaders toured the facilities and learned more about the school.

James' marketing efforts paid off. The most recent lottery reflected an increase in diverse applicants, and the waiting list to enroll in the 330-student school swelled to 700. The push to attract more diverse students has energized current students and parents as well. James has seen an increase in attendance at parent meetings and a more proactive student council. Plans are in place to expand the enrollment campaign next year to reach even more families.

Chad Stover, Principal

Greencastle-Antrim Elementary School
Greencastle, Pennsylvania

Student Enrollment: 680
Grades: 3–5

Principal Chad Stover had two priorities for the school year: increase parental involvement in school and help 3rd–5th grade students score higher on state standardized tests. As a first step, he used a *Sharing the Dream* grant to increase the number of home visits teachers made to 50 percent over the previous year. Stover also wanted to know what kept parents from being more involved in school. So, with the grant, he surveyed 500 families to identify obstacles that kept parents from taking part in activities. Half of respondents said that work schedules, small children and the stress of daily life conflicted with school involvement. The results of the survey will be used to guide decisions about future activities at Greencastle-Antrim.

To improve students' test scores, Stover and his team launched a before-school program that combined physical activity with test prep. Three mornings a week, children enjoyed 30 minutes of physical activity, followed by breakfast and 30 minutes of individualized instruction using a standards-based online course called Kid's College (www.ltskc.com). *Dream* funds covered resources, materials, and nutritious breakfasts for 50 students to attend the six-week program.

Reports generated by Kid's College suggest that students made significant gains in math and reading. Stover wants to build on this success by extending next year's before-school program to 8–10 weeks and offering it to more students.

Susan Quinlan, Principal

Foster Traditional Academy
Louisville, Kentucky

Student Enrollment: 641
Grades: Pre-K–5

Susan Quinlan was aware that many of her students' families could not afford to enroll their children in recreational or enrichment activities outside of school. Recognizing the positive impact of such programs on children's academic and personal growth, she decided to offer a variety of no-cost after-school clubs to students that would nurture their talents and interests and expose them to new experiences.

Six after-school clubs were started with the support of a *Sharing the Dream* grant: drama, health and fitness, dance, technology, gardening and character education. Teachers and parents volunteered to guide the groups, and project manager Terri Davenport kept everything running smoothly. On the strength of the program, Quinlan was able to secure additional funding from other partners to provide stipends for the teachers and to bring an artist-in-residence to the drama workshop.

In all, 100 low-income students signed up for clubs. "They had the opportunity to pick clubs based on their own interests and were excited about participating," Quinlan said. She observed that the children did not want to miss club meetings, so they came to school regularly and completed homework assignments on time (a condition of participation). Quinlan also saw a substantial decrease in the number of disciplinary referrals among these students. Funding is being sought to continue the clubs next year.

Valerie E. Sawinski, Principal

Edward Bleeker Junior High School
Flushing, New York

Student Enrollment: 1009
Grades: 6–8

Despite a strong science magnet program, families in the neighborhood of Edward Bleeker Junior High School were known to falsify their addresses to keep their children from attending school there. “The problems we have been addressing are low parent attendance at school meetings and events and an old, negative, unfounded reputation that continues to plague the school,” said Principal Valerie E. Sawinski. Determined to change perceptions, she and her staff held a Science Sensation Family Festival to showcase Edward Bleeker’s exemplary science program and teachers, and thus ease parents’ apprehensions.

Project organizers targeted families of students who would be attending Edward Bleeker as 6th-graders, inviting them, along with current students, to the science festival, which featured hands-on experiments and exhibits sponsored by the Center for Architecture, the Queens Zoo, and the Queens Botanical Garden. A *Sharing the Dream* grant paid for advertising and supplies, and science-themed take-away bags for children. Two-hundred twenty-five families participated in the wildly successful event. In the spring, 44 children and their families toured the Center for Architecture and participated in interactive building projects. “It was wonderful way to introduce families to an institution that none of them had visited before, and to encourage them to make use of vibrant educational and cultural institutions in New York City,” said Sawinski.

Community perceptions of Edward Bleeker are beginning to change, thanks to the Science Sensation festival and field trip. Applications for the science magnet program have greatly increased, and neighborhood families zoned for Edward Bleeker have expressed to Sawinski that they feel more confident about sending their children there. Sawinski wants to make the Science Sensation an annual event and plans to invite additional partners, such as the Hall of Science, to participate.

Andrew Boy, Principal

Columbus Collegiate Academy
Columbus, Ohio

Student Enrollment: 60
Grades: 6–8

Principal Andrew Boy’s goal was to show 6th-graders and their families that college was possible. “Most of our students and families have never stepped foot on a college campus,” he said. He knew that if parents came to believe that college was a viable option, they would begin to plan for it, and children would begin to picture college as part of their futures.

Calling his project *College Bound in Columbus*, Boy organized a series of trips to Ohio State University for families to experience a real college campus. After touring the grounds, the group learned about the college application process, options for financial aid, and classes that students might expect to take as freshmen. *Dream* funds covered the cost of bus transportation, lunch and snacks. One parent reported: “The tour was my chance to show my son how great his life can be. I want him to know what’s out there so he can go get it!” Following the tours, children worked with their parents to define their educational goals and plan for the future.

Although many parents attended the tours with their children, some did not, and Boy is determined to involve these parents next year by adjusting the times of the tours and offering them on weekends. He also will provide a taxi reimbursement to parents who lack transportation to the school to meet the buses. Boy’s plans for the program are ambitious. He wants to take students to colleges outside of the Columbus area, to out-of-state schools, and ultimately to Harvard.

Julie Gay, Principal

Ballwin Elementary School
Ballwin, Missouri

Student Enrollment: 493
Grades: K–5

Concerned with the rising rates of childhood obesity, Principal Julie Gay and her staff launched a program called *Team B.L.U.E.* (*Believing, Living, Understanding and Engaging in a Healthy Lifestyle*) to provide families and students with fitness and nutritional resources; tips, advice and healthy recipes; and fun, school-based recreational activities to promote health and wellness.

After surveying families about their concerns and attitudes regarding exercise and healthy eating, the team developed a year’s worth of school-wide, health-focused programming that was integrated into the school day. Health classes guided students in making better food choices; a *Team B.L.U.E.* page was added to the school newsletter featuring articles, low-fat recipes and upcoming events; a cookbook was published; and a Health Fair—supported by *Dream* funds—was held in January to kick off a new year. The school also sponsored 5K road races and a Jump Rope for Heart day, raising funds for the American Heart Association.

Close to 300 students, parents and staff attended the *Team B.L.U.E.* health fair, and took away “health packs” to support a healthy lifestyle at home. “By continuing to partner and engage students and their families in healthy active living, we are giving them more than just an education, we are giving them tools for living,” Gay said. Plans for next year include an outdoor geocaching family picnic where teams of students will use GPS devices to hunt for hidden containers, or “caches.” The Rockwood School District recognized Ballwin’s efforts by awarding them \$1,000 to continue *Team B.L.U.E.*

Dr. Phyllis Jones, Principal

Baker Elementary
Acworth, Georgia

Student Enrollment: 782
Grades: Grades: K-5

Determined to increase the level of parental involvement at Baker Elementary, and recognizing that families hit hard by the recession were scaling back on entertainment spending, Principal Phyllis Jones and her team proposed a series of fun, no-cost, school-sponsored events the whole family could enjoy.

Two hundred people attended Baker's "Bedtimes, Brownies and Books" event in November. Families wore their pajamas, swapped used books and listened to guest readers. To finish the evening, children received take-away bags of literacy-themed items. In January, 75 families participated in a Saturday math scavenger hunt at a local grocery store. Fifty families attended a "standards and testing" trivia event in February. And, a "Donuts with Dad" event drew 200 men. "There were families I did not expect to see," said the PTSA president. "It as if the opportunities are opening doors for people to be more involved."

The overwhelming response created a welcome challenge for project organizers. "We now know to expect more families for future events and plan accordingly," Jones said. Because of the strong interest in the "Donuts with Dads event," a new committee called *Dads Involved in Baker* has been formed.

Dr. Gloria Roman, Principal

Ana Roque de Duprey Elementary
School
Chicago, Illinois

Student Enrollment: 231
Grades: 1–8

Many of Ana Roque de Duprey’s students are bussed in from other parts of the district where schools are overcrowded. As a consequence, students often did not feel a sense of connectedness to the surrounding neighborhood. Likewise, the community was not as involved in the school as Principal Gloria Roman wished. Roman’s idea to bridge that disconnect was to send students out into the community to learn more about it and, in the process, introduce the school to the community.

She partnered with Street-Level Youth Media, an organization that educates Chicago’s urban youths in media arts and emerging technologies, to collaborate on a video project called *Discovering West Town Video Project*. Eighth-graders researched the West Town community, interviewed residents, and produced two 8-minute documentaries: one investigating gangs and another on a local campaign called *No Se Vende* (Not for Sale), aimed at preventing an economic development plan that would displace many lower-income residents. *Dream* funds supported production costs of the video, as well as stipends for guest speakers who provided historical perspective on West Town.

The videos were screened in the classrooms and at parent meetings, and they were also viewed at a Street-Level Youth Media showcase event. “Parents saw how media can be a powerful tool for engaging students in meaningful learning,” Roman said, adding that, “95 percent of students reported that they knew more about the community than they did before the project.” Ana Roque de Duprey’s partnership with Street-Level continues to grow. The school is participating in Street-Level’s *My Community Matters* project sponsored by the Chicago Children’s Museum, and Street-Level has extended invitations to Ana Roque de Duprey students to attend free summer camps.

Helen Hargis & Kenneth Burdette, Principals

Wyatt Edison Charter School
Denver, Colorado

Student Enrollment: 666
Grades: K–8

Wyatt Edison Charter School’s goal was to create a collaborative school culture where learning does not stop at the end of the school day and parents are involved in their children’s education. *Sharing the Dream* funds supported Family Fun Nights at the school, each centered on a core content area. One hundred families attended the Math Family Fun Night in the fall, eating dinner together before playing math games. A wintertime literacy event attracted 125 families, and students were given books to take home. Project organizers welcomed upwards of 200 families to two science events in the spring.

The *Dream* grant also enabled Wyatt Edison teachers to connect personally with families through home visits. “I really enjoy having a close relationship with my son’s teachers,” said one parent, “There is a great team of teachers and people working to ensure his success at school. I know I can contact his teachers no matter what the situation.”

The visits are now a key component of Wyatt Edison’s outreach to engage parents. Organizers want to increase the number of visits next year, and a training program is being developed to help teachers make the most of their time with families. Parent ambassadors also are being recruited to reach out to new families in an open, reassuring way: greeting them at school-wide events and encouraging parents—especially those who are most hesitant—to volunteer in classrooms.

Linda Peraems, Principal

Woodland Elementary School
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

Student Enrollment: 926
Grades: Pre-K→6

For 2008-2009, Principal Linda Peraems set a goal to retool Woodland Elementary School's behavior policies to be more consistent, positive and effective. With a *Sharing the Dream* grant, she and her staff embarked on an intensive analysis of behavioral incidents at the school: identifying the types of infractions; how, when and where they occurred; and which students were involved. Their investigation revealed that a majority of infractions occurred on the playground, and that boys of color received the highest percentage of disciplinary referrals.

With that in mind, the team designed and implemented a clearly articulated school-wide behavior policy emphasizing positive reinforcement. A 5th- and 6th-grade student leadership team was formed, and recognition events were scheduled to reward well-behaved students. Peraems and her team also created a professional development plan for teachers, outlining strategies to help them address behavioral issues consistently across classes.

Before a uniform behavior plan could be agreed upon, however, Woodland staff had to differentiate between classroom and school-wide behavior plans. Peraems explained; "Although they sound one and the same, in reality teachers have a pulse on their classrooms and need to conduct their environments to meet their own personal style. Once this was established the remainder of the project went smoothly." With the new policy in place, Peraems saw a drop in the number of behavior incidents in high-occurrence areas, such as the playground, and among boys of color.

Catherine Reinholdt, Principal

Violetteville Elementary Middle School
Baltimore, Maryland

Student Enrollment: 416
Grades: K–8

In her efforts to create a more welcoming, collaborative and family-centered school environment, Principal Catherine Reinholdt used a *Sharing the Dream* grant to transform the parent-volunteer program at Violetteville Elementary Middle School. She started by appointing a parent to serve as a liaison, reaching out to families, chiefly families who have elected to transfer their children to Violetteville under Baltimore Public Schools' Parent Choice Transfer Option (PCTO) program. For these parents, who live in other parts of the city, volunteering at the school can be difficult.

Reinholdt knew that many working and PCTO parents could not volunteer in-school during the day, so she changed times and days of meetings, and made it possible for them to serve in other ways, such as chaperoning field trips, attending PTA meetings and providing classroom support at home. Workshops for parents also were offered, covering topics such as diversity, family decision-making, school policies and conflict resolution. To connect families further, Violetteville organized three fun events, including a field trip to the National Aquarium in Baltimore.

As a result of these initiatives, the number of parents involved in school committees and PTA meetings rose; a PCTO parent now sits on the newly-formed parent advisory panel to advocate for Parent Choice families; and 50 volunteers were recruited, as opposed to last year's 20. Reinholdt believes that the steps Violetteville has taken to engage parents will advance stronger parent-school connections. Future plans include a literacy component, adult G.E.D. and computer classes, and a partnership with the University of Maryland as a Professional Development School.

Karen Lyon, Principal

Thomas Edison Elementary School
Covington, Kentucky

Student Enrollment: 263
Grades: Pre-K–5

When Principal Karen Lyon and her team decided to host a series of monthly family nights at the school, all agreed that the events should offer more than just the opportunity for participants to bond. “Our focus was not just having ‘get-togethers,’” Lyon said, “but to actually help parents learn about our academic programs and take teaching skills home with them.” The monthly program—*T.R.E.A.T.S. (Together Raising Expectations Across the School)*—was backed by a *Dream* grant.

Organizers planned each month’s workshop around an academic theme, such as reading or nutrition, and teachers modeled lessons with the help of Thomas Edison students, providing parents with practical strategies, materials and know-how to support their children’s learning at home. Although the family nights were intended to be informative, they were fun, too, with door prizes, free books and other incentives. To finish each evening, everyone enjoyed a meal together.

Participation in the family nights increased as the year progressed. And anecdotal evidence suggests that parents who attended *T.R.E.A.T.S.* were more aware of what their children were learning in school and what homework to expect. “Their participation in parent-teacher conferences became more engaging and more of a two-way dialogue as well,” Lyon said.

Nicole Nash Gales, Principal

Springfield Ball Charter School
Springfield, Illinois

Student Enrollment: 378
Grades: Pre-K–8

Literacy and a love of reading are at the heart of Springfield Ball Charter School’s approach to learning, so Principal Nicole Nash Gales planned a number of family literacy activities to make reading a priority at home and to engage parents more meaningfully in school.

Calling the initiative *Our Community R.E.A.D.S.: Realizing Excellence, Achieving Dreams in Springfield*, Gales and her staff made literacy a focus of the year, dedicating space in school newsletters to offer parents tips and ideas for how to read with their children -- such as asking questions about the storyline, and identifying beginnings, middles and endings. The school also hosted a series of book club meetings, during which parents and children read together. At a Literacy Night for All event, families received information and materials to support reading at home, and participated in a variety of activities, including a read-aloud. A *Dream* grant covered the cost of supplies, food and equipment to support the book clubs and Literacy Night.

Though book club attendance was lower than Gales expected, the response from parents and children was positive. “Providing structured time for families to read together is important and meaningful, whether there are 5–10 families or 50–100. Those who show up matter,” she said. Gales plans to repeat the book clubs next year and add a writing component.

Kristin Bijur, Principal

San Francisco Community School
San Francisco, California

Student Enrollment: 282
Grades: K–8

Like many educators, Principal Kristin Bijur was troubled that low-income and culturally-diverse families were not as involved in school as were affluent families. She and her staff had been working for some time to solve this “disproportional involvement” with some measure of success. “We have seen families build alliances and relationships across differences such as race, class and age, when they are putting up tents together on a camping trip or teaching games to students at the school picnic,” she said.

Bijur believed that she could increase parent engagement across the board by fostering relationships among families. But this time, she turned to parents to make those connections. She and her team elected 25 parent “event chairs” from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds to organize and run school events, such as fairs and literacy events—supported by a *Sharing the Dream* grant. Bijur encouraged the chairs to think beyond their immediate social circle when recruiting volunteers and to make a point to involve hard-to-reach families. The event chairs exchanged ideas and supported each other at monthly Parent Action Committee meetings, then met after the events to talk about what worked and what didn’t.

Results of the initiative were promising. “In our school of 285 students, 52 families who had never previously participated in a school event, volunteered at an event,” Bijur reported. But some parents primarily saw their roles as event planners, and did not go as far as Bijur would have liked to involve new families. She plans on meeting with the chairs next year to discuss goals, and to share strategies for growing their networks of volunteers to include lesser involved parents.

Annette M. Ffolkes, Principal

Roscoe R. Nix Elementary School
Silver Spring, Maryland

Student Enrollment: 404
Grades: Pre-K–2

To target working families and encourage their participation in school-sponsored events, Principal Annette M. Ffolkes used a *Sharing the Dream* grant to host four Saturday morning literacy events called *Books and Breakfast*, each organized around themes such as multiculturalism, Read Across America and Curious George. A special effort was made to personally invite working parents and families whose children needed extra help in reading.

Books and Breakfast was designed with the entire family in mind, featuring storytellers, read-alouds, hands-on activities, and materials and tips parents could take home to support reading. “We learned that providing a program for the whole family was the best way to draw parents into the building,” said Ffolkes. “Parents did not have to arrange for child care for younger siblings and could expose other caretakers, like grandparents, to the school.” Representatives from local health and social service agencies were also in attendance.

Fifty families attended the first *Books and Breakfast*, with subsequent events attracting upwards of 100 families. The program will be offered twice next year and be funded by the school’s Title 1 Family Involvement Committee.

Cheron Reid, Principal

Rockdale Academy
Cincinnati, Ohio

Student Enrollment: 498
Grades: K–8

In the best of times, many of Rockdale Academy’s families struggle to get by financially, but the recession caused extra privation because of unemployment and dwindling career prospects, especially for those lacking a high school diploma. Principal Cheron Ried knew that economic hardship, and the associated stress, adversely affected children’s learning and kept parents from participating more fully in school. So, she and her staff surveyed parents to see what kinds of resources, workshops and activities the school could provide to help families and improve at-home conditions for learning.

Responding to requests by families to offer adult educational opportunities, Reid and her team launched the *Community Adult Advancement Network (CANN)* with the support of a *Dream* grant to specifically target parents and their needs. A G.E.D. computer course was offered and marketed to parents via fliers, mailings and telephone calls home. Twenty-five adults, ages 22 to 65, participated in the G.E.D. course; 17 completed it successfully. The remaining eight plan to repeat the course next year with a new group.

Financial workshops also were held throughout the year on topics such as debt management, foreclosures, identity theft and credit card management. “From the beginning, we had a good turnout for the resource workshops,” Reid said. She found that participation in *CANN* led to greater involvement in PTO and school board meetings, and classroom volunteering. Future workshops will focus on adult literacy and strategies how to help children with homework.

Linda R. Thomas, Principal

Evan Shortlidge Academy
Wilmington, Delaware

Student Enrollment: 437
Grades: K–5

From the start, Principal Linda R. Thomas’s Reaching for the Stars Reading Incentive was ambitious: challenge students to read 100 books over the course of the year. The goal was to encourage a daily habit of reading for pleasure, while increasing reading scores across grade levels.

Fifty families attended the Dream-sponsored launch party in September, which featured games, a read-aloud, food and details about the 100-book challenge. An extra resource session was offered in the library following parent-teacher conferences, during which a reading specialist suggested age-appropriate books and modeled how parents could support reading at home. Students who read 25, 50, 75, and then 100 books were recognized at assemblies throughout the year.

Thomas was disappointed that only 6 students read 100 or more books. But, reductions in library staff and lack of parent participation resulted in what Thomas describes as a “gap in the management of the program.” Nevertheless, gains in reading scores were made, and she plans to continue the program next year under the direction of a reading specialist. A literacy event for incoming kindergarteners and their families is also in the works.

Dr. Maria Chairez, Principal

Quannah McCall Elementary School
Las Vegas, Nevada

Student Enrollment: 481
Grades: Pre-K–5

In her quest to boost parental involvement at school, Principal Maria Chairez proposed a series of weekend family events that combined fun and academics. Project organizers held six Saturday schools for 4th–5th graders, January through March, focused on math, reading and writing. More than 150 students and 15 teachers attended each session. “The children love to come to Saturday School to learn, see their friends and teachers, and to eat,” Chairez said.

Quannah McCall Elementary also hosted two Super Saturdays, during which families rotated through a variety of learning stations; painted a mural; networked with local social services agencies; and received calculators and books to take home. In May, children and families enjoyed an entire day of fun activities, including performances by Primary Focus, an award-winning elementary program that promotes positive choices; and a community fair featuring booths from more than 15 local organizations, including the Boys and Girls Club, family resource and community centers, and the public library. Students received donated backpacks filled with donated supplies, books, games and educational DVDs for summertime learning. A *Dream* grant paid for advertising, food and Primary Focus fees.

In feedback forms, parents expressed extreme satisfaction with the Saturday School program. Reading test scores went up 10 percent for students who attended the sessions, and disciplinary referrals among these same students decreased. Chairez and her team plan to hone the Saturday sessions to focus equally on math skills to increase test scores in that area.

Karyn King, Principal

CLK Elementary School
Calumet, Michigan

Student Enrollment: 695
Grades: K–5

“Our staff fully realizes the importance of quality literacy experiences for all our students,” Principal Karyn King explained. “We also recognize that more of our children are coming to school without these experiences.” *Children Succeed when Families Read* was launched to expose least served students and families at CLK Elementary to quality children’s literature.

King and her staff met in the fall to plan four no-cost Family Reading Nights, each developed around high-interest themes: Local History Jamboree, Wizard of Oz, Slumber with Books, and Tree House. Teachers modeled strategies to help families read together: members of the community read their favorite stories aloud; and children received packets of free books and activities to take home. “Families were grateful to have these free experiences for their children especially during these hard economic times,” said King. *Sharing the Dream* funds covered take-home materials, supplies and food.

Between 50 and 60 families attended each of the events. And, King has observed the presence of more parents in the school library. “There seems to be more of a positive connection with parents as to what’s happening in our library with their children and literacy.” She is exploring new funding sources to support additional Family Reading Nights.

Robert Malay, Principal

Machananao Elementary School
Agana, Guam

Student Enrollment: 388
Grades: K–5

Robert Malay faced a daunting challenge as a principal of Guam’s Machananao Elementary School. “Some of our families come from remote islands where formal schooling is optional. Expecting nine- and ten-year-olds who have never been to school to simply begin on the first day with appropriate skill sets is unreasonable.” His first step was to reach out to parents, who speak a variety of languages, and provide them with the information, resources and support they needed to become equal partners in their children’s learning.

Project Ayuda (“ayuda” means *to be of service to*) centered around a conference for parents of all students and included four modules: 1) establishing learning rituals in the home; 2) motivating students; 3) providing learning assistance in the home; and 4) monitoring student’s educational progress. *Dream* funds were used to advertise and translate fliers and registration forms into Chuukese, a language spoken by 40 percent of the population. Funds also covered the cost of bus transportation for parents to visit Guam’s Parent Information Resource Center and the nearest public library, where parents signed up for library cards. The publication of a Parent Handbook, which will be translated into 12 different languages, was also supported by the grant.

Malay’s dream is for Machananao to become the center of learning for families in the community. To that end, he has several projects underway, including: establishing a parent resource center on school grounds, so that parents don’t have to travel to the Island’s resource center; opening a Transition-to-School Center for older students with no formal schooling; and offering G.E.D., computer, and Internet classes to parents.

Jackie Daniilidis Principal

Estelle Elementary School
Marrero, Louisiana

Student Enrollment: 1003
Grades: Pre-K-5

When Principal Jackie Daniilidis and her staff proposed taking 500 students to the Audubon Zoo in historic Uptown New Orleans, they knew they could not do it alone. They involved parents from the beginning: inviting their input during the planning stages, engaging them in homework projects to prepare for the trip; and asking for commitments to chaperone.

The idea was to supplement 3rd-5th graders' classroom study of world habitats and biodiversity with an intensive real world experience. Daniilidis and her staff also wanted to demonstrate to parents how field trips and other activities outside the classroom could boost interest in science and other subjects. A *Sharing the Dream* grant paid for zoo admission and bus transportation, including a wheelchair-accessible bus for special-needs students. For families recovering emotionally and financially from Hurricane Katrina, visiting a world class zoo for the first time was a special treat. "The joy on the faces of the children and the excitement of the parents was a very meaningful experience for me," Daniilidis said.

Parents made a scrapbook of the zoo trip, featuring photographs and students' drawings and stories, and worked with their children on a project to create a new species of animal, which required students to explain what kind of habitat it would need to survive. "Parents viewed themselves as significant stakeholders in this cooperative effort, which was indicated by the level of input and suggestions in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the project," Daniilidis said. A new parent/teacher committee has been formed for the 2009-2010 school year to plan and implement similar activities and events.

Robert Pollock, Principal

Adele B. Looscan Elementary School
Houston, Texas

Student Enrollment: 479
Grades: Pre-K–5

It was apparent to Principal Robert Pollock that language barriers were keeping many Spanish-speaking parents from being involved in their children’s school. Membership in the PTO was low, and teachers’ requests for volunteers went unanswered. Of more concern, parents seemed hesitant to approach teachers and staff. “For several years, our parents have been asking for an ESL class, but, due to budget constraints, we were not able to afford it,” Pollock said.

A *Sharing the Dream* grant helped pay for ESL instruction, games, activities, dictionaries and special picture books to help Adele B. Looscan parents learn English. There was some hesitation among parents at first. “They were walking into the unknown,” Pollock said. “There was one parent who never had a formal education. Imagine never going to school and finding yourself in school with adults who have had some type of education.” Despite their initial reservations, seventeen parents signed up for the program.

“Though they are not totally fluent in English, the parents now attempt to converse with teachers and staff in English,” Pollock said, adding that he has observed a slight increase in PTO meeting attendance and volunteering. Plans are being made to provide a G.E.D. class and workshops to help parents support their children’s learning at home.

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Roberta B. Tully Elementary School
Louisville KY

Director, Zone 6

Juli Mary Kwikkel
Storm Lake Elementary School
Storm Lake IA

Director, Zone 7

Kenny L. Jones
Parkside Elementary School
Powell, WY

Director, Zone 8

Deborah (Deb) Ayers-Geist
Turner Elementary
Kansas City KS

Director, Zone 9

Dwight D. Liddiard
East Meadows Elementary
Spanish Fork UT

Foundation

Cynthia Toles-Woods
C.A. Donehoo Elementary School
Gadsden AL

Foundation

Mark O. Terry
Eubanks Intermediate School
Southlake TX

Executive Director

Gail Connelly
NAESP Headquarters
Alexandria VA

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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