Stories of Principals

Actively Engaging Communities
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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 6th edition of Spotlight on Best Practices, we feature the work of our 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 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

Actively Engaging Communities
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 and 2009-2010, 60 principals—30 each year—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.

Appoint bilingual parents or teachers to serve as liaisons.
Non-English speaking parents will feel more comfortable attending school events and volunteering if they are personally invited by someone who speaks their language and understands their culture.

Track attendance trends. Many students are active with team sports, music lessons, recitals and other extracurricular activities, which can impact turnout at school activities. Keep track of attendance at events, expect some fluctuation during the year, especially during the spring, and fine-tune meeting times and dates going forward.

Create a buzz. Save-the-date refrigerator magnets; contests, scavenger hunts and games; wearable pins or bracelets; a kick-off party; video “trailers,” or a viral marketing campaign, are fun, creative ways to generate excitement for your program.
2008-2009: PROFILES OF BEST PRACTICES

Actively Engaging Communities
PROFILE

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

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.

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.”
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

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

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.”
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.

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


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

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.

**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.

**Resources**

- Kids Against Hunger [www.kidsagainsthunger.org](http://www.kidsagainsthunger.org)
- LEGO eLab [www.LEGO.com/education](http://www.LEGO.com/education)
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.
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

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.

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.

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
Inspire children to make a difference in their community. Being in service to others could potentially be an empowering, life-changing experience.
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*
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.

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.

Resources

That’s A Family!
www.groundspark.org

Teaching Tolerance
www.tolerance.org

National Association for Multicultural Education
www.NAME.org
(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.
2008 - 2009: **SNAPSHOTS OF BEST PRACTICES**

Actively Engaging Communities
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: 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

Violetville 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 Violetville 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 Violetville 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, Violetville 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. Reinhold believes that the steps Violetville 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: 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.

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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.

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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 Ffolks. “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 María 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.
“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 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.
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.
Actively Engaging Communities
For many families that had lost all their photographs and possessions in Hurricane Katrina, the Once Upon a Time writing project allowed them to create new memories and keepsakes that will be treasured for many, many years.

Janette White, Principal
Janette White, Principal

South Hancock Elementary School
Bay St. Louis, Missouri
Student Enrollment: 523
Grades: K–5

Healing a Community Through Storytelling

Three years after Hurricane Katrina devastated Bay St. Louis, Missouri, South Hancock Elementary was finally relocated from temporary facilities to a permanent building. Two elementary schools were combined into one for the move, and Principal Janette White admitted that in all the upheaval, “engaging the community seemed like a nice idea, but who had the time, resources or energy.” Still, she knew that it was more important than ever to unite parents and the community around the new school.

She and her team came up with an idea for a monthly writing workshop for parents, students and teachers called Once Upon A Time: Parents and Students Write Together that would engage families in the creative writing process and prepare 3rd—4th graders for a state writing test. What White could not have anticipated was how Once Upon A Time would uplift entire families who, four years after Katrina, were still recovering from the storm.

Implementation

White partnered with the University of Southern Mississippi’s Live Oak Writing Project, an affiliate of the National Writing Project, and used a Sharing the Dream grant to launch the after-school writing group for students and their parents. Coinciding with the National Day of Writing, Once Upon a Time’s first workshop was held on October 20, 2009, and attracted 80 participants. As parents and children wrote stories about their families and traditions, and their lives before and after Katrina, “there were joys and sorrows that brought us together in personal ways and gave us the feeling of commonality and acceptance to build on,” White said.

Subsequent workshops focused on coaching families through the writing process by introducing prewriting techniques, such as outlining, and by offering guidance as parents and children wrote original stories and poems. The apprentice writers met individually with teachers and Live Oak Writing Project consultants to edit and finalize their pieces. A session on digital storytelling showed them new ways to create and share their work electronically. Students (and parents) not only improved their writing skills, but families bonded over their stories, and enjoyed a feeling of accomplishment after their work was published in an anthology. At a year-end signing party, “children and parents proudly autographed their work as real authors do,” White said.
Results

Teachers observed that students who participated in the *Once Upon A Time* program approached writing with more enthusiasm and imagination. Parents, too, grew as writers. “Those who were unsure and timid about sharing their stories have made tremendous strides in their confidence and abilities,” White said. Several parents have expressed a desire to attend more writing programs, and some were interested in having their pieces published in magazines and newspapers. Although attendance at workshops fluctuated over the course of the year, “for those who made the commitment to the project, there was a determination to find alternate times and complete writing assignments,” she said.

*Once Upon A Time*’s impact reached beyond the monthly workshops. Teachers who worked with the consultants from the Live Oak Writing Project learned how to integrate writing across the curriculum, and practiced new ways to help all students develop as writers. White reflected, “I was impressed with a statement from the California Writing Project that we adopted as our goals. It stated, ‘Writing connects families and friends and preserves memories. Writing as a family teaches the power of collaboration. Writing helps solve problems. Writing helps children take a stand.’ The Sharing the Dream grant allowed us to accomplish these goals and more,” she said.

Next Steps

Drawing on the resources and leadership provided by the Live Oak Writing Project during the pilot year, *Once Upon A Time: Parents and Students Write Together* can be replicated indefinitely. “It can be used over and over again, not just with 3rd and 4th graders, but across all grades,” White said. She believes strongly that the program was healing for many South Hancock families and she is positive going forward. “The swirling waters of Katrina took away our homes, our schools, our communities and our dreams. This year we have learned not to wait for the rain to pass, but how to dance in the rain.”

Leadership Lessons

- Offering an open and accepting space for parents and children to express themselves in creative ways can strengthen family-school bonds, supplement learning, and even heal communities
- Experienced consultants can provide training, resources, and a structural framework during the pilot year that can be replicated by school staff in subsequent years
- Finishing the year with a fun, celebratory exhibit, performance or “book signing” showcases the work of emerging authors, artists and musicians and boosts their confidence and self-esteem
Resources

National Writing Project
www.nwp.org

Digital Is
A collection of stories, reflections, and resources about teaching and learning writing in a digital age.
http://digitalis.nwp.org/collection/engaged-writers-crafting-new-texts

Writing connects families and friends and preserves memories.
Writing as a family teaches the power of collaboration. Writing helps solve problems. Writing helps children take a stand.
Building Better Readers with a Home Connection placed new books in our home each week and this generated excitement about reading. The books were targeted to our daughter’s reading level. Very appropriate and effective!

Parent participant
**Profile**

**STORIES OF PRINCIPALS ACTIVELY ENGAGING COMMUNITIES**

Marcelle Marble, Principal

G.H. Jewett and Miles Lane Schools
Bucksport, Maine
Student Enrollment: 322
Grades: Pre-K–4

Taking Literacy to the Next Level

Principal Marcelle Marble recognized that when children are given books to read that are too far beyond their ability, they can become discouraged and give up on reading. “All too often, children are asked to read books that are too difficult,” Marble said. “We needed a program to put ‘just right’ books into the homes of students.” She and her team came up with an large-scale school-to-home literacy program for 1st—2nd graders called Building Better Readers with a Home Connection to help children become more confident, eager readers.

Each week, parent volunteers assigned three books per student that were sent home—two “leveled” books for the student to read independently, and an advanced book for parents to read with their child. The program not only inspired emergent readers, it guided parents in selecting the right level books for their child. Parents learned that “When children read ‘easy’ books over and over, this helps develop reading fluency, as well as promote confidence,” Marble said. “And children who feel successful as readers will keep reading.”

Implementation

To kick things off, a family literacy night was held. Parents were introduced to the program and participated in reading activities with their children, and students took home book bags. A book room was opened in the school and 1,000 books were purchased with Dream grant funds, with the emphasis on titles that were written at appropriate reading levels. Through testing and guided reading activities, teachers measured students’ individual reading abilities and matched them with books that were challenging enough to support progress, but not so hard that they would become frustrated.

Each Wednesday, 135 students took home three books to read with their families. Two of the books were at the child’s reading level and could be read independently. Children also received one “family book” for parents to read to the child. Families had five days to enjoy the books before returning them. “We processed 400 books in and 400 books out each week!” Marble said. Teachers monitored reading levels and coordinated with program volunteers to make sure the books being sent home were at the appropriate level for the reader. “We enjoyed having ‘new’ books to read every week,” said one parent. “My son’s reading skills improved a lot after starting the program.”
Results

Seventy percent of all 1st—2nd graders and their families participated every week. The program had a significant impact on literacy performance, with 70 percent of students in 1st and 2nd grades meeting literacy benchmarks in April, and 75 percent in June—a notable increase over last year’s 67 percent. Parents also received valuable guidance for selecting the right level books for their child. One parent commented, “the program helped me determine which books would be easier for our daughter to read from our home library, and build her confidence with those, and help her build up to longer and more complicated books.”

Surprising to Marble was the initial resistance from some teachers who already had take-home reading programs in their classrooms. “Opening avenues for communication about the challenges and opportunities of a new program might have helped build broad staff support at the outset,” she said. A welcome result of Building Better Readers was the creation of a committed group of parent volunteers who organized and ran the program. “This truly was an added bonus!” said Marble. “I did not anticipate that we would have parents that would sustain a weekly commitment to the program. Every day they were in our newly formed book room talking about how to make it grow.”

Next Steps

The program has been so successful that next year Marble wants to expand the lending library to include books for every reading level in the school. She also plans to offer a series of workshops to guide parents in helping emergent readers gain confidence and fluency. “We will review our program and discuss ways that we can help parents with reading at home,” she said, pointing out that Building Better Readers with a Home Connection was designed with long-term sustainability in mind. “It’s fully organized, materials have been purchased, and parent volunteers have been trained and have taken ownership of the program. We have only just begun!”

Leadership Lessons

• Parent helpers will become invested in a program, and volunteer more consistently, when they are given active roles.

• Involving teachers, parents and the public in the development of new school-wide initiatives generates excitement and minimizes resistance to change.

• School-to-home literacy programs can help children become better readers and inspire a lifelong love of reading.
Resources

Association for Library Service for Children
www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc

Reading Rockets
Teaching kids to read and helping those who struggle. www.readingrockets.org

The program helped me determine which books would be easier for our daughter to read from our home library, and build her confidence with those, and help her build up to longer and more complicated books.
As parents began to feel comfortable and to form tight bonds with their children’s teachers and school staff, they began to notice what a tremendous impact they could have, first on their own children’s education, and then on the whole school culture.

Mary McNamee, Principal
Mary McNamee, Principal

Lynbrook Elementary School
Springfield, Virginia
Student Enrollment: 462
Grades: Pre-K–6

Lessons in Leadership

A Sharing the Dream grant took Lynbrook Elementary’s goal to broaden parents’ impact, responsibility and sense of belonging in school to the next level. Principal Mary McNamee explained: “The participants were a group of mothers from diverse backgrounds who had already participated in parenting education programs through our Family Learning Center (FLC), who we felt were ready to begin their journey as parent-leaders and volunteers.”

After attending classes through the FLC the year before, “most understood what their role was at home and what was expected of them to support their children’s academic success,” McNamee said. “But they did not realize that they could be as influential at school.” She and her team called the offshoot program Hopes and Dreams Family Leadership Initiative and foresaw that the mothers’ confidence and natural leadership skills would blossom “in a comfortable and trusting environment where everyone is supporting them and believing in them.”

Implementation

McNamee’s toughest challenge was removing obstacles to participation. “We discovered early on that one of the main reasons why our parents did not volunteer in the school was they couldn’t afford babysitting for their young children who were not school aged.” So Lynbrook opened a training center and babysitting co-op on-site, where parents attended leadership and enrichment workshops, and took turns watching children while others helped out in the building.

The parents made all the decisions about running the Hopes and Dreams Family Leadership Initiative and childcare co-op, called Mommy and Me, which met on Fridays for two hours. “They chose the session topics and decided who would teach them, and organized children’s activities together,” said McNamee. The school’s volunteer coordinator met regularly with the group and provided training and encouragement. “Soon we had a core group of mothers who came in on a weekly basis to volunteer. They volunteered in the cafeteria, the classrooms, library and on the playground.”
Results

Attendance at the leadership sessions was 97 percent, with most of the participants helping out with Mommy and Me classes. Many went on to enroll in other parent programs at school including computer and English as a second language classes. Collectively, Hopes and Dreams participants logged 157 volunteer hours. “Once they really became involved, teaching other parents, volunteering at school, attending PTA meetings they really became part of the school community,” McNamee said.

Through their volunteer activities, parents became more knowledgeable about the school day and classroom rules and routines. Mothers who volunteered in the library learned how to access resources and began to encourage their children to check out books. Observing their children in the cafeteria and on the playground gave parents insight into students’ social behavior and new discipline strategies to try at home. “They acquired a deeper appreciation for the challenges their children, and their children’s teachers, faced at school each day,” said McNamee. Parents also enjoyed being recognized in the hallways by Lynbrook’s teachers and staff. “Many of them shared that their own children began asking when they would be volunteering in the classroom again. They felt a huge sense of pride and responsibility.”

Next Steps

McNamee wants to add a mentoring component to the Hopes and Dreams Family Leadership Initiative so that parents who participated this year will mentor new volunteers next year. She also wants to offer field trips, art classes, and a book discussion group focused on “family leadership.”

Leadership Lessons

- Identify barriers to participation, such as lack of childcare or transportation, and overcome them in creative ways.
- Schools can be centers of learning not only for children, but for whole families.
- Building on successful existing programs can take programming to the next level.

Resources

Project Appleseed
Provides resources for parents who want to be involved in their children’s schools and for schools who seek their involvement.
www.projectappleseed.org

Parent Institute for Quality Education
Fosters partnerships between parents, students and educators to further students’ academic success.
www.piqe.org
Collectively, Hopes and Dreams participants logged 157 volunteer hours. “Once they really became involved, teaching other parents, volunteering at school, attending PTA meetings they really became part of the school community.”
The *Marshallese Leaning on Literacy Nights* gave us an opportunity to have honest conversations with leaders in the Marshallese community to effectively meet the needs of children and families.

*Regina Stewman, Principal*
Connecting Across Cultures

Springdale, Arkansas is home to the largest community of Marshallese families outside the Marshall Islands in the Pacific. At Robert E. Lee Elementary, Principal Regina Stewman used funds from a Dream grant to organize a series of Marshallese Learning on Literacy Nights to make parents feel welcome and to involve them more fully in their children’s education.

She and her team visualized a program that would strengthen connections with Marshallese families; improve children’s learning; reduce school absences; and break down cultural barriers. The school had offered a similar program aimed at Spanish-speaking families. “We wanted to provide the same opportunity for Marshallese families,” Stewman said.

Implementation

The school held several evening events over the course of the year. Following a shared meal, parents attended sessions on a variety of academic- and health-related topics, while their children were tutored in the library by University of Arkansas at Fayetteville undergraduates. “The goal was to assist our families to improve student achievement,” Stewman said. “Also, we wanted parents to know about community resources that were available to them.” She was concerned that many Marshallese children went hungry at lunch because their parents were not aware of the free and reduced lunch program. Stewman and her staff guided parents through the application process, increasing participation in the program.

The school experienced a high mobility rate among Marshallese students, who frequently moved within the neighborhood and district, and many families did not provide the school with up to date contact information. “What we found was that we needed to educate the families about the importance of making sure the school could contact them at all times.” So, time was reserved during family nights to collect current information. Staff also invited representatives from local organizations, such as the Arkansas Parent Information Resource Center and the Springdale police department, to speak on topics of parenting and safety. In the spring, U.S. Census Bureau employees helped families complete 2010 Census forms.
**Results**

“Our attendance for Marshallese students has been an issue for several years,” Stewman admitted. But simply explaining the importance of consistent attendance with parents resulted in a dramatic 70 percent reduction in the number of days missed over six months. And for the first time this pilot year, all Marshallese kindergartners met the district’s mid-year goal for knowing their letters and sounds.

Parents have come to depend on the Marshallese Learning on Literacy Nights to the degree that “even if families have to move because of personal circumstances, parents are coming to us to do an in-district transfer request to keep their child at our school.” When one family was facing a move out of the school district, a parent called Stewman, who was able to create a smooth transition for the child at the new school “Rarely do parents initiate this form of communication, with us, so I was very pleased,” she said.

**Next Steps**

Stewman plans to continue Marshallese Learning on Literacy Nights at Robert E. Lee indefinitely, expanding the program to include English language classes and volunteer training for parents. The successful program has already been replicated in three other district schools.

**Leadership Lessons**

- Families arriving from other nations may not be familiar with American school policies and expectations, or have knowledge of services available to them. Sharing this information with parents is sometimes all it takes to improve cooperation and school involvement.

- Partnering with local organizations to welcome and connect with families from diverse cultures creates strong communities.

- Getting to know parents from different cultural backgrounds can provide insight into the unique needs of all students.

**Resources**

EdChange
Professional Development, Research and Resources for Diversity, Multiculturalism, & Cultural Competence.
www.edchange.org

Kids Around the World
Introduces elementary school-age children in the United States to the lives of children of the same age in developing countries around the world.
www.katw.org
Partnering with local organizations to welcome and connect with families from diverse cultures creates strong communities.
Providing a broad spectrum of activities for families to enjoy together gives parents more opportunities to become involved.

Barbara Cook, Principal
Barbara Cook, Principal

Wurtland Elementary School
Wurtland, Kentucky
Student Enrollment: 288
Grades: Pre-K–5

All Around Fitness for Families

As principal of a rural school, Barbara Cook set out to create a closer-knit community by strengthening ties with parents, integrating service-learning activities, and by exposing families to artistic and cultural experiences. “Living in a rural area often means limited opportunities for attendance and participation in the arts,” she said.

With a Sharing the Dream grant, she and her team implemented Fitness and Family Go Hand-in-Hand, an innovative approach to engaging parents and students that organized new and existing school events around four spheres of educational “fitness:” physical, cultural, social and academic.

Implementation

Offering a wide range of family-friendly activities and events opened numerous portals through which parents could become involved. To enrich families’ physical fitness, for example, the school started a walking club, and held a Fun Olympics event for parents and children to exercise together. “The Fun Olympics was an opportunity for parents to participate with their children during track and field activities instead of sitting on the bleachers,” Cook said.

Cultural and social fitness activities included drama performances, puppet shows, a fine arts night, and a fiesta-themed evening for families, during which the language curriculum was introduced. Also, routine visits to a local nursing home gave students a chance to interact with elderly residents. Make-It-Take-It workshops supported students’ academic fitness by teaching parents how to help with homework. Students developed projects for a technology fair held at the local high school, and the school sponsored a number of student recognition programs, opened to families, to reward academic progress.

Results

Cook’s primary focus this year was to increase parent turnout at events, and while gains over last year were made, attendance fell slightly between December and June. Looking to the future, Cook said, “We’re exploring ways to boost parent involvement during the latter half of the school year.” Fitness and Family Go Hand-in-Hand had a measurable impact on more than just parent participation. “The most gratifying result of this project was survey data reflecting that students enjoyed coming to school,” said Cook.
Next Steps

“Parents, students and community members have been very receptive to learning more about our school through the various activities we’ve organized,” said Cook. She and her team are developing new activities for each of the four spheres of fitness for future years.

Leadership Lessons

- Organizing multiple activities and events around an overarching, cohesive theme helps schools achieve key goals.
- Provide multiple means of entry for parents to become involved.
- Inviting families to share in student recognition events fosters pride and excitement.

Resources

International Child Art Foundation
Integrates the arts with science, sport and technology for the development of children’s innate creativity and intrinsic empathy.
www.icaf.org

Let’s Move
Aims to increase opportunities for kids to be physically active, both in and out of school and to create new opportunities for families to move together.
www.letsmove.gov
To enrich families’ physical fitness, for example, the school started a walking club, and held a Fun Olympics event for parents and children to exercise together.
2009 – 2010: Snapshots of Best Practices

Actively Engaging Communities
Principal Diane Jones had two goals for the school year: reach out to parents, whose first language was not English, and improve ELL students’ math, science and reading skills. Jones explained, “Our vision for Storm Lake was to increase family engagement, provide opportunities for shared decision making, and support parents in their roles as partners in the education of their children.” With a Sharing the Dream grant, she and her team launched a series of monthly meetings for ELL families called Parents in Action. The meetings explored topics such as standards and curricula, navigating the school’s website, interpreting test scores, and subject area activities and materials to support at-home learning. Parents also were able to participate in a weekly English language course held at the school. Thirty parents attended the first Parents in Action meeting in September. By December, attendance had risen to 50 parents. Among families who participated, Davis observed improved student attendance, fewer office referrals, and a marked increase in the number of ELL parent volunteers at school events.

For next year, Davis plans to add more sessions to help parents coach reading and math skills at home. “Student achievement will continue to be a priority for future parent meetings and activities,” she said. Additionally, plans are underway to open a resource center expressly for ELL parents, which will provide books, videos, English language instruction and computer access.

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Anne Vickers, Principal

Sandhills School  
Columbia, South Carolina  
Student Enrollment: 39  
Grades: 1–8

A Sharing the Dream grant enabled Anne Vickers, head of Sandhills School in Columbia, South Carolina, to host a Speaker Series, open to all parents and educators, featuring experts in the areas of language-based learning differences, ADHD, anxiety disorders in children and other topics. One interactive session simulated for parents and educators
what it is like for a child with dyslexia. Another session explored the impact of anxiety disorders on children’s development and learning.

Sandhills School has since become a resource for parents seeking information about learning differences. Vickers is pleased to report that public and private school teachers and administrators from all over the Columbia area have participated in the Speaker Series. “By building these strong relationships, we can work well with other schools when a student transfers to Sandhills or when a student mainstreams.”

Vickers plans to continue the series for the 2010-2011 school year, making changes to the spring event calendar based on attendance trends that she observed. The sessions are so well attended that she is exploring the use of a larger school’s auditorium, and adequate sound equipment, to accommodate everyone.

Carey Dahncke, Principal

Christel House Academy
Indianapolis, Indiana
Student Enrollment: 416
Grades: K–8

Recognizing the crucial role that fathers play in children’s learning and development, Carey Dahncke of Christel House Academy in Indianapolis, Indiana started an All Pro Dads program with a Sharing the Dream grant. Organized as a series of breakfasts, children invited fathers, grandfathers, uncles and other important men in their lives to spend time together to discuss a topic, such as having a positive attitude; enjoy a meal together; and participate in fun activities, including a prize raffle. “Not only were students excited to ‘show off’ their dads,” a teacher said, “but all the fathers valued the time they spent with their children.”

An average of 84 fathers and children attended the All Pro Dads breakfasts each month. A highlight was an appearance by Charlie Johnson, offensive left tackle from the Indianapolis Colts, who inspired the group with stories about his career and experiences as a parent. “My son and I both look forward to our All Pro Dad’s mornings,” said one dad. “They foster a great feeling of community...I can talk with other dads who face similar challenges as myself.”

“Our most important accomplishment was showing fathers just how important they are in the eyes of their children,” Dahncke said. He plans to continue the program next year, targeting older students and their fathers. “We are also looking into holding events at other locations, such as parks or skating rinks, and considering afternoon meetings to attract new families.”
To boost parent involvement, Dr. Gladys Camp used a Sharing the Dream grant to make the school’s academic family nights more welcoming and accessible to diverse families. The three events, designed around core subjects, were advertised in English, Spanish and Chinese, and featured pizza, prizes, parent workshops, and learning activities for all.

At the school’s “Reading Around the World” literacy event, parents learned how to support reading at home, while students rotated through eight read-aloud stations, where they listened to traditional stories from Cameroon, China, Venezuela and other countries. Families were introduced to the school’s mathematics curriculum and played math games during the math family night. The culminating science family night included a “Mad Science” performance followed by hands-on science experiments. An average of 250 people attended each family night. “We had a very high turnout among our Chinese- and Spanish-speaking parents,” Camp reported.

Strong John Thomson Elementary plans to continue the family nights in 2010-2011, seeking additional supporters, and targeting diverse families by translating materials and resources into different languages. Recognizing the value of reading together, in any language, the school library has added to its collection of books written in Spanish, including beginner’s books for parents who are practicing their reading skills. “Providing easy readers empowers parents to read to their children,” Camp said.

Bill Vogel, Principal

Tincher Preparatory School
Long Beach, California
Student Enrollment: 1139
Grades: K–8

For the 2009-2010 school year, principal Bill Vogel used a Sharing the Dream grant to connect with families who lived in outlying neighborhoods, raise parents’ attendance at school events, and help them prepare their children for college.

(We offered) a free 9-week course for parents called Bringing Our Parents to School that demonstrated how to discuss college expectations with children and foster supportive learning environments at home.
Tincher Preparatory teamed up with Parents Involved in Quality Education and local institutes of higher learning to offer a free 9-week course for parents called Bringing Our Parents to School that demonstrated how to discuss college expectations with children and foster supportive learning environments at home. Ninety parents graduated from the course, entitling their children to guaranteed admission into participating California universities. Vogel also arranged for 85 parents to tour the California State Long Beach campus. Additionally, two family events, attracting 1,500 parents in all, were held in the spring where families posed for keepsake photographs and learned about social and community services available to them. Free bus passes were provided to non-local families without transportation so that they could attend.

Reflecting on 2009-2010, Vogel said, “Our parent outreach was by far the most productive in that we were able to offer services that we had not been able to in the past. Parents expressed appreciation for our efforts and felt more comfortable coming to school and more empowered to take an active role in their children’s education.” Vogel is exploring funding options to continue the Bringing Our Parents To School programming next year.

Held quarterly, students and their parents started the day with a nutritious meal, followed by discussions on such topics as self-esteem, internet safety, and peer pressure. iMom participants received take home resources; All Pro Dads featured former sports figures who shared inspirational messages. At both meetings, parents networked, building a strong community of caring adults experiencing similar challenges and joys in raising adolescents. “Parents learned that they are not alone,” Perez said.

The program did more than just strengthen relationships between families. It created an open door for parents to become more involved at Westwood. “It’s always been difficult to get parents to volunteer their time at middle schools,” Perez said. “But with the help of the Dream grant, we now have 41 volunteers, up from 29.” Parents also requested more frequent meetings. Several met with Perez over the summer to brainstorm new topics for 2010-2011, including exercise and nutrition, peer relationships, and community volunteering. To increase attendance at iMom and All Pro Dads meetings, Perez and his team came up with a creative marketing idea: “We’re giving parents magnetic calendars for their refrigerators to remind them of meeting dates, and to reinforce the important role families play in children’s lives and education.”

Jose Perez, Principal

Westwood Middle School
Winter Haven, Florida
Student Enrollment: 904
Grades: 6–8

Recognizing that parental involvement is key to students’ academic success, and that “middle schoolers still need their parents’ time and attention,” principal Jose Perez launched iMom and All Pro Dads breakfast meetings at Westwood Middle School with a Sharing the Dream grant.

Jose Perez, Principal
Dr. LaToy Kennedy, Principal

Calvin Wiley Elementary School
Greensboro, North Carolina
Student Enrollment: 260
Grades: Pre-K–5

“All parents want their children to be successful, but many don’t know what can be done at home to help students reach their potential,” said principal Dr. LaToy Kennedy. With a Dream grant, she planned a full calendar of fun after-school family activities to demonstrate that everyday experiences, from cooking to music to roller skating, can provide rich opportunities for learning.

W.I.N.G.S. (believing in your Worth, trusting your Insight, Nurturing yourself and having a Goal, and devising a personal Strategy) activities included a twice-weekly after-school tutoring program for 3rd through 5th graders and their parents. While children received instruction in core subjects, and participated in art and music lessons, their parents spent time in the computer lab, or “Cyber Cafe,” learning new skills. During the school’s “Reading with the Stars” event, teachers dressed up as celebrities and gave parents strategies to support reading at home. Parents attending “What’s Cooking at Wiley” learned how to use recipes as tools to teach arithmetic and reading concepts to children. Field trips to a skating rink, bowling alley, and restaurant showed parents how they could weave-in learning while having fun, for example, reading the menu together. Lastly, two parent retreats covered practical topics such as preparing for state tests and what to expect at parent-teacher conferences.

Test scores for students in the tutoring program improved, exceeding state expectations, and as word got out about W.I.N.G.S. activities, attendance increased, from an average of 20 parents in the beginning to a peak of 150. “We learned that parents will come out if they perceive that it will be fun,” Kennedy said. Next year she wants to add more cultural experiences for families and involve new local partners.

Christine Hoffman, Principal

Inverness Elementary School
Birmingham, Alabama
Student Enrollment: 612
Grades: Pre-K–3

Principal Christine Hoffman wanted to encourage culturally diverse parents who attended a literacy program at Inverness Elementary to volunteer in the school and become more actively engaged in their children’s learning. “Many of these parents were reluctant to participate in school activities outside the literacy program,” Hoffman said. “so more opportunities were created for them to engage and connect with other parents and staff.”

To start, project organizers reached out personally to parents, inviting them to longstanding school events—parent-teacher conferences, the library open house, and a gingerbread making day—and made sure that ELL staff were present to provide extra support. Dream funds supported field trips to a botanical garden and art museum, Reading and Math Literacy Nights, and a cultural
In its opening year, Monarch Academy used a *Sharing the Dream* grant to create an outdoor learning space that inspired cooperative spirit among staff, students, and parents; enhanced experiential learning; beautified the grounds; and ultimately, symbolized the fledgling school’s emergent vision and community.

A committee of teachers, parents, and a master gardener designed the garden, coordinated the volunteer effort to build it, and showed teachers how to use the garden to bring to life concepts that students were studying in the classroom. Features included an outdoor classroom area with four picnic tables; a speaker series, open to the public, covering topics of urban gardening, composting, and pest control; a gardening resource library; and a butterfly habitat. A Garden Corps, made up of parents and students, cared for the plants after-school during the growing season.

Principal Maurine Larkin likens the *Community Garden Project* to the evolution of Monarch Academy itself. “As a new school, with a new staff, in a new facility, there were countless unforeseen obstacles to ‘breaking ground’ for our new garden,” she admitted, “but I am confident it will continue to develop over the years as a physical representation of our vision and growth.”

Maurine Larkin, Principal

Monarch Academy Public Charter School
Glen Burnie, Maryland
Student Enrollment: 208
Grades: K–1, 5

fair. Hoffman is convinced, “that the good attendance at our Literacy Nights was a result of the on-site childcare.”

Over 100 parents attended the two literacy nights, and 30 went on the field trips. The PTO president went along on the trips, allowing her to get to know parents better and recruit them as volunteers. Hoffman said, “It has been such a joy to see that many of our parents now feel comfortable enough to volunteer in the school.” To maintain connections over the summer, the school’s library opened several times for book check-out. Families had access to easy readers, purchased with grant funds, and participated in an at-home reading program.
Deanna Diable Sinito, Principal

New Horizons Middle School
Brooklyn, New York
Student Enrollment: 218
Grades: 6–8

Principal Deanna Diable Sinito was concerned about “minimal” parent involvement at New Horizons Middle School. Parents would attend parent-teacher conferences but that was about all. With a Dream grant, she hosted monthly breakfast meetings for parents at local Brooklyn restaurants where they discussed school policies, service learning, high school readiness and other topics.

“The meetings set a tone for involvement,” Sinito said, “giving us a forum to let parents know about activities, workshops and opportunities available to them through the school or community.” Her decision to hold the sessions in restaurants, rather than at school, enabled her to meet parents where they lived, and resulted in partnerships with local business owners, who later sponsored school events.

Sinito credits the Monthly Parent Breakfasts in the Community project for an increase in the number of parent volunteers and participation in school activities and community service projects. “Our PTA had its most successful fundraising year because more parents were informed and involved,” Sinito said. The breakfast meetings will continue in 2010-2011.

Mark Hinthorn, Principal

Newby Elementary School
McMinnville, Oregon
Student Enrollment: 449
Grades: K–5

For three years, Newby Elementary has offered a language immersion program for students to take classes taught in both Spanish and English. Principal Mark Hinthorn observed, “It’s difficult for many parents in our two-way bilingual immersion program to help their children with reading and writing in the second language at home because they lack proficiency.” He used a Sharing the Dream grant to offer two 10-week evening courses for both English- and Spanish-speaking parents and students to practice their second language skills together.
Staff were on hand to offer parents ideas and suggestions for how to coach their children in the second language, and participants were given bilingual books to take home. Especially gratifying to Hinthorn were periods in class when parents, whose first languages were English and Spanish, paired up and took turns conversing in the two languages. “The conversational focus really promoted interaction between the two language groups,” he said. “Before this class, parents would see each other in the hallways or while waiting to pick up their children, and have little to no meaningful interaction or dialogue.”

Over half of the families who attended in the fall, signed up to continue in the spring, and the courses proved to be highly successful with most students performing at or above grade-level proficiency by the end of the year. Funds have been allocated to offer a third 10-week course in 2010-2011.

Jason Buto, Principal

James W. Parker Middle School
Edinboro, Pennsylvania
Student Enrollment: 687
Grades: 5–8

A Sharing the Dream grant enabled Principal Jason Buto to test an unique technology-based service, called AnComm: Talk About It, to create a safer, stronger, more caring school community, where students felt comfortable sharing thoughts and concerns with teachers.

The online service allows students to reach out to teachers anonymously to discuss personal issues or report incidents of bullying or other unsafe behavior, without fear of retribution or embarrassment. Over the course of the year, students sent 2,474 messages to teachers, who responded with guidance or intervened as necessary to prevent potentially dangerous situations from escalating. Teachers were given rare insight into students’ lives, and students who were reluctant to speak face-to-face used the messaging service as an outlet. “Teachers were able to assess a situation and determine if it was outside their scope or comfort level and involve a counselor or whoever could best help the student with their problems,” said the 5th—6th grade counselor.

“Our students are growing up in a time when electronic communication has always been a part of their world,” Buto said. “They are not only used to communicating electronically, many prefer communicating this way.” He attributes a decrease in the number of bullying incidents, and an overall improved school climate, to AnComm: Talk About It and is seeking funding at the district level to cover the service in the future.
**Heidi Critchley, Principal**

**Park Side Elementary School**  
**Marshall, Minnesota**  
**Student Enrollment: 441**  
**Grades: Pre-K–5**

Principal Heidi Critchley is a firm believer that a great start in kindergarten is critical to future success in school. But, she acknowledged, “Some children enter the primary level ready to read. Others do not know any letters or sounds. There is only one teacher in the classroom to address the needs of a wide range of learners.” Faced with budget cuts, she had to come up with a creative way to provide kindergartners with one-on-one individualized attention, especially in math, reading and writing.

With a *Sharing the Dream* grant, Critchley launched the Foster Grandparent Program, recruiting older adults and retirees to volunteer in the kindergarten classrooms, working one-on-one with students. “Our ‘grandparents’ are so proud to be actively participating in the school building and shaping our future through their impact on children,” Critchley said.

The Foster Grandparent Program helped Park Side Elementary exceed its yearly kindergarten learning goals, and contributed to the lowest kindergarten retention rate in six years. “Our ‘grandparent’ population has so much to offer,” Critchley said. “I am grateful to be able to use their services, skills and knowledge to benefit our students.” Her ultimate plan is to have a foster grandparent in every classroom.

**Julie Hartmann, Principal**

**R.F. Pettigrew Elementary School**  
**Sioux Falls, South Dakota**  
**Student Enrollment: 425**  
**Grades: K–5**

For R.F. Pettigrew Elementary, which opened its doors for the first time in July 2009, a website was an indispensable tool for connecting parents and students, and the community, to the new school. Principal Julie Hartmann used a *Dream* grant to design and launch the site, which features pages for teachers to update parents on classroom news using blogs, digital journaling and video.

The website also includes links to local partners, such as the Pettigrew Home and Museum; the school calendar; archived PTA newsletters, and more. “The website allows us to ‘go green,’” Hartmann said. “We are using less and less paper because documents can be read on the website or printed at home.” Besides the website, *Dream* funds enabled the school to open the library at night once a week for families to read and check out books.

“Finding ways to reach out to the Pettigrew community is an ongoing project for our school,” admitted Hartmann, who wants to increase attendance at open library nights, and explore other ways to get parents involved. She also wants to provide training to help teachers create and update their classroom Web pages.
Principal Sandra C. DeShazier and her team developed *Parents Assisting in Student Success (P.A.S.S.)* University to give parents practical ideas for how to help their children learn at home. Family training seminars were held quarterly, covering reading and writing, math, and state learning standards.

The workshops were held in the evening so that working parents could attend. Over 125 parents attended one or more *P.A.S.S.* workshops, and many “graduates” went on to become school volunteers. “The more opportunities we gave parents to participate, the more they signed up,” DeShazier said. “More men joined our volunteer group too.”

Next year she wants to add workshops on time management and technology, and hold seminars in tandem with PTA meetings to boost participation in both groups, and to encourage more parents to become involved as volunteers. “Our hope is that all of our parents will be able to attend at least one *P.A.S.S. University* session.”

“Parents want an opportunity to come to school and see what their children are learning,” said Principal Jeffrey Banks, who used a *Sharing the Dream* grant to hold three *Family Nights* focused on language arts, math, and science and social studies.

Each night opened with a shared meal, followed by fun, educational activities that families could do together. Parents and students made bookmarks, used laptop computers to access literacy websites, tried Smart Board technology, learned math concepts using M & Ms, built towers using uncooked spaghetti and marshmallows, flew model airplanes, and more. Students took home new books after the literacy night. The three evening events attracted an average of 150 parents and students each.

“I could tell the families had a great time learning together,” Banks said. “And we were able to build relationships with parents that will strengthen connections between school and home.” He is seeking local sponsors to continue the *Family Nights* next year.
Dr. Marian Brown, Principal
Benjamin Banneker Charter Academy of Technology
Kansas City, Missouri
Student Enrollment: 152
Grades: K–8

Principal Marian Brown used a Sharing the Dream grant to demystify the school’s thrice-yearly reading and math diagnostic tests so that parents could partner with teachers to help improve scores. “We learned that with the right ‘tools’ and training, teachers could articulate how the data drove their instructional decisions and how parents could help in the process,” Brown said.

Called DRIVE, the program trained teachers how to talk to parents about the purpose and value of the diagnostic tests, and how to share results with families. When parents met one-on-one with teachers to review their children’s individual test scores together, they “understood how teachers used the data to make decisions about their children’s education,” Brown said. At PTO-sponsored workshops, parents learned how they could support testing goals at home. To keep everyone updated on results, individualized data reports were sent home regularly, and progress charts were displayed outside classrooms. “Parents felt a sense of pride seeing their student’s name and picture in the hallway as they visited the school,” Brown said. Students also kept track of their progress and were motivated to improve.

As everyone’s knowledge of the diagnostic tests improved, so did scores. “Student scores dramatically increased from the first and second testing to the third,” Brown reported. DRIVE was so successful that it has become a permanent program at the school.

Pamela Holmes, Principal
Capuano Early Childhood Center
Somerville, Massachusetts
Student Enrollment: 400
Grades: Pre-K–1

A Sharing the Dream grant brought together 120 Somerville early childhood educators for a ground-breaking one day professional development forum called Getting School-Ready: Carrying the Thread. Chief organizer Pamela Holmes said, “All teachers of young children value and appreciate the opportunity to meet, collaborate, and share concerns in their efforts to provide a quality early childhood education.”

At the forum, preschool and Head Start teachers from around the city worked together to develop curriculum components and a universal transition form that they could use to help preschoolers move to kindergarten. Attendees also received a copy of Joseph Slate’s book, Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten, for their classrooms.

Holmes reflected on the event: “The city-wide forum has been a critical community builder, strengthening the communication between community-based early childhood programs and the public school kindergarten. Our blueprint for kindergarten readiness will lay a foundation for all children to be successful.”
“We were able to provide translators, so the event was ‘simulcast’ for Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian-Creole families,”

About 100 parents attended the follow-up New Kindergarten Parent Night, featuring tips for families to help them prepare for kindergarten; a panel of parents who shared their experiences; and a presentation from a kindergarten teacher. “We were able to provide translators, so the event was ‘simulcast’ for Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian-Creole families,” Holmes said. She was thrilled with the turn-out, which reflected 25 percent of the city’s new kindergarten families. “This will definitely become an annual event.”

Jenny Chambers, Principal

Central Fine Arts Academy
Sand Springs, Oklahoma
Student Enrollment: 501
Grades: K–2

An important lesson principal Jenny Chambers learned this year was “If the school provides the appropriate conditions for families, they are eager to participate.” Her team organized a series of five Family Art Club Events (FACE), scheduled at night so that working parents could attend with their children. “Including the entire family for the evening seemed to be the key to the success of the program,” she said.

The sessions included a meal, an art lesson, and activities for everyone in the family. Sharing the Dream funds covered the cost of the art supplies. Between 150-200 people attended each FACE event, where families used art to explore the theory of multiple intelligences, Cinco de Mayo, and other themes. At January’s FACE, which focused on the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., participants completed art works that represented their own dreams for the future. Families celebrated the Chinese new year in February by making Chinese drums.

“We learned that the events must be designed to allow encourage every family member to participate in some way,” Chambers said. “We are currently looking for other resources to help fund the FACE project for the upcoming school year.”
K. John Fairbairn, Principal
Eagleridge Elementary School
Ferndale, Washington
Student Enrollment: 486
Grades: Pre-K–6
Dismayed by comments he had heard from Native American students—“this isn’t our school” “there isn’t anything here that looks like us”—principal K. John Fairbairn came up with the idea to permanently install a piece of culturally significant Native American art in the school building.

He began by soliciting ideas from students and the school’s Native Culture Council, who suggested a canoe, symbolizing the local Lummi peoples’ livelihood and traditions. With a Dream grant, a Lummi carver was commissioned to make a smaller scale canoe, which was mounted prominently in the school lobby. Inspired by the canoe project, a renowned Lummi totem pole carver donated a pole to Eagleridge Elementary, which features an orca, the school’s mascot. “The art has helped our Native American students to feel like this is their place, too,” Fairbairn said. He and his staff also shared a meal at the community center on the Lummi reservation, a gathering that he hopes will become an annual tradition.

Looking to the future, Fairbairn would like to commission new pieces of art at Eagleridge to reflect Native American and other cultural groups. “We had been so afraid to be culturally insensitive that we didn’t do anything,” he admits. “But by being willing to stick our proverbial necks out, the rewards have multiplied themselves. While we were carving a canoe, we were also carving out relationships, trust and collaboration.”

Evangeline Iglesias, Principal
Finegayan Elementary School
Hagatna, Guam
Student Enrollment: 1090
Grades: Pre-K–5
In the past, Principal Evangeline Iglesias and her staff had to rely on newsletters to communicate with families in her rural community. She wanted to make Finegayan Elementary a center of learning and community not only for students but for parents. With a Sharing the Dream grant, she opened a Parent Resource Center in the school’s main office.

There, parents have access to computers to learn about upcoming school events, communicate with teachers, and check on
their children’s academic progress. Parents are encouraged to voice their concerns and suggest ideas to improve the school. “Knowing that a specific area in the school is designated for them lets parents know that their involvement is important,” Iglesias said. The Dream grant also enabled her to launch a website to share school news and activities with parents, students and the neighborhood.

For the future, Iglesias wants to improve the school’s infrastructure to support more computers and to provide more reliable Internet service. She also wants to offer computer training workshops for parents and teachers. “They are apprehensive,” she admits, “but also excited about what technology will bring to the future of our school.”

Carol S. Dawson, Principal

Holton Elementary School
Holton, Michigan
Student Enrollment: 397
Grades: Pre-K–4

“No matter what socioeconomic background families come from, the bottom line is parents want their kids to be successful and they want to help, if only someone would show them how,” Principal Carol S. Dawson said. She and her team held five Parent Education Family Outreach Nights with a Sharing the Dream grant.

For back to school, parents learned how important it is for children to have a good night’s sleep, so they can arrive at school rested and ready to learn. The next session introduced the school-wide behavioral program, which helps children think about and make better choices. “Our behavior referrals have decreased this year by over 10 percent!” Dawson reported. “Many of our families adopted the program at home.” Subsequent family nights focused on reading and writing. At the culminating math night, families played games and received summer learning kits with materials and instructions for playing the games at home.

“The parents were thrilled to have some ‘at home’ learning tools to use over the summer,” Dawson said. “And the teachers were thrilled with the positive response from parents.” The events attracted between 40 and 260 participants each, and more than 80 percent attended more than one session. Dawson is looking at survey results to plan topics for next year’s family nights.

“No matter what socioeconomic background families come from, the bottom line is parents want their kids to be successful and they want to help, if only someone would show them how.”
Yleen George, Principal

West Elementary School  
Grand Prairie, Texas  
Student Enrollment: 932  
Grades: Pre-K–6

Principal Yleen George’s goal in establishing the Court of Honor and the Order of Virtue at West Elementary was to provide diverse, mostly low income girls and boys with experiences that would help them realize their academic and leadership potential. Over the course of the year, 4th through 6th graders met twice-weekly after school to participate in a range of group activities aimed at developing self-esteem, responsibility and cooperation.

Students wrote and performed skits to explore how they might handle tricky social situations at school; worked together to solve complicated puzzles; engaged in service learning projects; and transformed a neglected area of the school grounds into a garden. They also organized an evening gingerbread house-making event for their families. George observed that misbehavior among Court of Honor and Order of Virtue students decreased, and “Many teachers reported that they are taking more responsibility for their learning,” she said.

Next year she wants to increase the number of parents involved. “We are seeking multiple avenues to get parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts into the building, so that our kids can reach their potential.”

Mary Lou Gutierrez, Principal

Everett School  
Chicago, Illinois  
Student Enrollment: 366  
Grades: Pre-K–5

This year, Mary Lou Gutierrez and her staff launched a sweeping school-wide campaign called The Resurgence of Everett School to get more parents involved. To start, teachers hosted monthly parent activities in their classrooms for a total of 120 parent activities over the year, including performances, student presentations, and after-school workshops.

A Sharing the Dream grant helped fund several school-wide family events including reading and cultural nights, a community gardening project, wellness fair, and dance-a-thon and 5K walk/run to encourage families to exercise together. “Many parents are now familiar faces around the school,” Gutierrez said. “Teachers feel they have a better relationship with parents now.” She was pleased with how readily teachers, parents and community members volunteered their time and services, allowing her to spend grant funds on much needed books and supplies for students and families.

Gutierrez and her staff are planning new family initiatives for next year including a Battle of the Books tournament and an August Harvesting Day connected to the school’s gardening project. “We will continue to think of creative school-wide events that promote a sense of community and also encourage learning and having fun together.”
Principal Sandra Gilmer and her team used a Sharing the Dream grant to operate a Helpline for parents once a week for two hours during the school year. The service was available online and in the school building where childcare for younger siblings was provided so that parents could help older children with homework. During Helpline hours, teachers offered homework support and shared school news and information.

A total of 138 families used the service—98 families consistently—and many parents became involved in school activities as a result of their participation. Five Helpline parents assumed leadership roles with the PTA; parent attendance at school events rose 22 percent; and the number of parent volunteers increased by 17 percent overall. “We have had nothing but positive feedback from parents appreciating the program and asking for even more support,” Gilmer said.

“The Helpline has been a catalyst for change,” she said. “It created a venue to communicate with parents in a different way that built trusting relationships, encouraged parent leadership, and improved student achievement.” Several community agencies have stepped in to help with the Helpline next year, and Gilmer plans to publicize the service at Open House next year to get parents involved sooner.
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APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


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