

Lt. Governor Matt Denn's
Parental Involvement Award
Winners

2010-2014

*Identifying Concerns,
Sharing Solutions*

August 2014



State of Delaware
Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Matthew Denn
Lieutenant Governor

As Delaware's Lieutenant Governor, I visit Delaware public schools on a regular basis, and one of the things that I hear the most from teachers is how important parental involvement is to student success. As part of a broader effort to expand parental involvement in Delaware's public schools, I created the Excellence in Parental Involvement award in 2009. It is given annually to two public schools that have successfully expanded parental involvement through innovative programs.

There is a direct link between parental involvement and improved student success. Students whose parents are involved are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs;
- Be promoted, pass classes, and earn credits;
- Attend school regularly;
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school; Graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

This guide highlights programs that "Excellence in Parental Involvement" schools have in place to improve their parental involvement. These schools have highlighted what their biggest challenges are and how those challenges became successes. We hope that this tool is helpful to you and your school. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Julia Lawes in my office at 302-577-8158.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Denn".

Matt Denn
Lieutenant Governor

2010

Howard High School of Technology



District: New Castle Co. Vo-Tech

City: Wilmington

Grades: 9-12

Number of Students: 900



Overview:

Howard High School of Technology is a comprehensive vocational-technical high school with approximately 900 students in grades 9 through 12, located in downtown Wilmington. Students from across New Castle County (covering five different school districts) are eligible to apply for admission to Howard, which is one of four vocational-technical high schools in the county. In addition to a full academic curriculum, the school offers 13 different career programs of study. Graduates earn both a high school diploma and a certificate of competency in one of the 13 programs.

Challenges:

- Convincing parents they can still be effective advocates
- Ability to provide variety of times to meet with working parents
- Providing an atmosphere of assistance for parents

Solutions:

- Convincing parents that they can still be effective advocates for their teenagers can be a difficult task but Howard High School met the challenge head on. Howard regularly communicates with its parents using the BlackBoard Connect system every Sunday night at 8:00 pm to announce all bulletins and upcoming events at the school. Parents have been receptive to this communication and agree that it helps them make sure their kids are prepared for the week, address any outstanding questions, and helps families' better plan for the week ahead.
- In order to make parental involvement more effective, Howard High School realized they needed to provide opportunities that didn't conflict with traditional work hours or with caring for other children. Howard decided to hold programs for parents at a variety of times to make sure no one was excluded. Howard now offers programs during the day and also in the evening.
- Engaging (or sometimes re-engaging) parents is hard, so making sure parents are comfortable is a large part of the equation. Howard High has a full-time Parent Coordinator on staff whose job it is to get – and keep – parents involved. The coordinator utilizes the career areas to create a comfortable home for both the parents and students. Howard High hosts regular hours at the Parent Information Resource Center to assist parents with any questions or concerns that they may have about the school.

- Howard also utilizes the Home Access Center – which every student in the state has access to where parents can access the web-based program from any computer to look at updates on homework, class work, and assignments, as well as attendance and discipline.

Questions?

For more information on what Howard High School is doing, and how it may work in your school, please contact: Stanley Spoor, Principal at Stanley.Spoor@nccvt.k12.de.us or at 302-571-5400.

2010



W. Reily Brown Elementary School

District: Caesar Rodney

City: Dover

Grades: K-5

Number of Students: 469



Overview:

W. Reily Brown Elementary School is located in Dover and serves students in grades K-5. W. Reily Brown Elementary School's mission is to provide an environment that brings student knowledge to a high level of extended thinking, ensuring all students are offered challenging instruction that is delivered in ways suited to each one's academic abilities and developmental needs. W.R. Brown has become more aware that their school is not only a place to educate children, but is a parent resource center as well.

Challenges:

- Family mobility, lack of comfort/vested interest in education and limited family resources, including transportation and child care options
- Lack of teacher time and availability
- Educator's misperceptions of parents' ability to be involved

Solutions:

- W.R. Brown continues to work to change preconditions of parent involvement and have improved staff attitudes and beliefs that facilitate parent involvement. W.R. Brown continues to make a concerted, proactive effort to ensure that parents are included, appreciated, and cared for. These needs include helping parents raise their children under adverse circumstances, including poverty, incarceration, family separation, and domestic violence.
- W.R. Brown follows up with "Thank You" notes of appreciation in an effort to empower parents to stay involved and believes there is absolutely no doubt that schools must make a stronger effort to involve parents when it is possible for the parents to be involved. They approach parental involvement knowing that every parent wants their child to succeed and try to offer programs that accommodate a variety of schedules.
- Monthly Academic Dinner Meetings - Through data analysis of student population, the school has targeted their most at-risk students according to their reading scale scores of the Delaware State Testing Program and other criteria. The parents and students of this group are invited each month to these evening dinner meetings for the following:
 - ◊ Collaborating with the community: These academic dinner meetings are sponsored entirely by Chick-Fil-A and Domino's Pizza located in Camden. (note: the school highly recognizes these volunteer donations as major contributors to school improvement).

- ◇ Parenting: Lessons on child rearing, bed-time reading routines, parent-child magazines (at no cost) and information on how to build family literacy at home.
 - ◇ Learning at Home: Lessons on how to help your child with homework, classroom strategies that are being taught, units of instruction, curriculum and Delaware standards.
 - ◇ Communication: Communicating to parents the demands of the state test, testing tips, grading practices, formative and summative assessments, understanding expectations of students and access to school websites, achievement liaison websites, classroom teacher websites, phone calls, emails, home visits and general “How can we help you or your family?”
 - ◇ Volunteering: Offering parents opportunities to explain their unique family situation at home and find ways in which they can offer any of their free time to help at school. Their stories may also help other families figure out how to balance and get more involved.
 - ◇ Decision-Making: Including diverse families as participants in upcoming committees, advocacy through PTO, and school decisions for future improvements.
- *Housing a Clothing Exchange:* With their unique needs, W. R. Brown hosted a clothing exchange. All staff and faculty members volunteered to bring in used clothing in a variety of sizes. Parents were encouraged to come to the school to receive their own free bag of clothing.
 - *Family Photo Day:* W.R. Brown hosted a family photo day, volunteering a free photo to all families by just stopping by right after school. Photography services were volunteered by faculty and printing was done through donations from Walgreens in Dover.
 - *Student-Led Parent Conferences:* Research indicates that improving student success depends on the active involvement of students in their own learning and that their role in understanding their own progress and assessment could benefit teachers’ instructional decisions and improve student learning. Traditionally, students stay home during parent conferences. At W.R. Brown, students are encouraged to come to school with parents for their conference. Students are involved with tracking their own formative assessment progress, enabling them to see where they are going, their own strengths and challenges, and areas of improvement.
 - *Out-of-School Time (OST):* OST is an after school program designed for the most at-risk students. This program is comprised of twenty students who meet for one hour, three days a week, for twenty-two weeks. These students have intense reading instruction using the components of “reading naturally” to build fluency and “time for kids” nonfiction readers to build background knowledge and comprehension. Parents of these students are contacted weekly and progress is available to view.

Questions?

For more information on what W. Reily Brown Elementary School is doing, and how it may work in your school, please contact: Susan Frampton, Principal at susan.frampton@cr.k12.de.us or at 302-697-2101.

2011



Anna P. Mote Elementary School

District: Red Clay Consolidated

City: Wilmington

Grades: PK-5

Number of Students: 598



Overview:

Anna P. Mote Elementary School is located in the Prices Corner area of Wilmington and serves approximately 600 students in grades Pre-K through 5th Grade.

Challenges:

- Accommodating the various work schedules of their parents
- 80% economically disadvantaged student population
- Majority of parents speak only Spanish

Solutions:

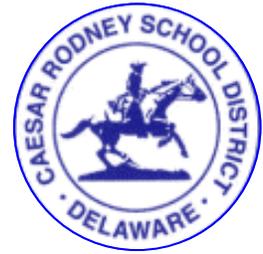
- Mote's PTA meetings are held at 9:00 a.m. and again at 6:00 p.m. The first grade team, in collaboration with their parents, scheduled a storyteller to visit and perform with the purpose of kicking off a "book in a bag" program at Mote. The storyteller performed during the day as well as the evening so each child could have this experience with a parent. Mote has also organized events and programs well in advance so parents are aware of the dates and times and can make arrangements if possible. Award ceremonies only last a half hour so that hourly-paid parents can be to the school and back during their lunch hour.
- All materials, notices, announcements are in both Spanish and English. Every event is staffed with interpreters. Mote typically has a couple of interpreters at each event. The families that attend are engaged and involved in the events. Questions are asked, conversations take place, and a very relaxed environment is appreciated by all.
- *Homeroom Connection:* It was requested by the Principal that each homeroom teacher identify a homeroom parent. At each open house in September/October, teachers reach out to parents to volunteer to be the contact person for the classroom. Teachers also develop a list of parents who are interested in getting involved. From this list the homeroom parent or the PTA can draw on it to call various parents for volunteer opportunities.

- *Common Planning Conferencing:* Common planning is not new; however, inviting parents to join teachers as they plan is newer initiative at Mote. Once a week the grade level teachers meet for common planning. Parents are invited to attend these meetings as well, with the purpose of gathering their input on programs they would like to see at Mote. Parents have commented positively in regards to how valuable they view this time at Mote and how respected they feel by the teachers.
- *English Classes:* One of the areas of need that Mote's parents expressed was their need, as parents, to become more proficient in English. Mote has a population of 78% Hispanic families, and know that the more they empower the parents, the more this will strengthen their student's academic progress. Mote now offers two classes, both on Thursday evening that address two levels of English language proficiency. In all, 16 parents are enrolled in these classes. An additional request by parents was to support their children so that they could participate in the English Classes. To accomplish this Mote created a menu of After School Programs.

Questions?

For more information on what Anna P. Mote Elementary School is doing, and how it may work in your school, please contact: Bradford Holstein, Principal, at Bradford.holstein@redclay.k12.de.us or at 302-992-5565.

2011



McIlvaine ECC

District: Caesar Rodney

City: Magnolia

Grades: Kindergarten

Number of Students: 544



Overview:

McIlvaine Early Childhood Center is located in Magnolia. McIlvaine Early Childhood Center serves approximately 480 kindergarten students (with the exception of students living on the Dover Air Force Base) for the Caesar Rodney School District.

Challenges:

- Information sharing with their families
- Consistency in engaging at-risk families
- Program funding

Solutions:

- A group of staff members serve as the “phone call brigade” during the summer months. Each registered student receives a welcoming phone call from one of the school’s teachers. The purpose of the phone call is to share general information about the school, opening day protocols, and to answer kid-specific or case-specific information. Staff members also invite families to attend one of the school’s “Sneak-A-Peak” sessions prior to the start of school.
- Three “Sneak-A-Peak” sessions are held prior to the start of the school year. Each session is from 4:00 -6:00 pm. Staff also volunteers to attend the sessions that meet their summer schedule. The “Sneak-A-Peak” sessions afford families and students the chance to tour the facility, meet their teacher, sign-up for the after-school Boys and Girls club, pre-load money on the child’s lunch account, and acquire their transportation tag for the first day of school.
- McIlvaine identifies special education students and students with low standardized test scores (using the DIAL readiness protocol) and personally invites them to the school in the summer. The summer visitation program allows the nurse to screen the students for vision and hearing, review the child’s health history and barriers to learning, and provide additional health insurance information (if needed) for families. While the child is screened by the nurse, other school staff often meets with the family to review the school reading bag and to provide additional academic support.

- Every student receives at least one “Mail from McIlvaine” postcard each semester. The purpose of the postcard campaign is to share great news about each student’s academic and social progress in school. Postcards are drafted at the beginning of each faculty meeting by all staff. Furthermore, postcards are sent by school administrators and specialists to students that need additional encouragement and support. The children that receive these postcards are chosen by the classroom teacher.
- McIlvaine utilizes the “Global Connect” call system extensively. One to two phone calls are pre-recorded and sent to families during each school week. The global connect calls are used to engage families, remind them to participate in school events, and share reminders of due dates and deadlines. Teachers provide the school secretary and clerk with noted changes to phone numbers. Staff members make personal phone calls (often from cell phones since the families may avoid a school number with caller ID) and send encouraging notes to families. Additionally, several home visits have been made to date by school staff to the homes of these pupils. Staff members that make home visits always “travel in twos;” this involves at least one of the school administrators. The school nurse has also supported this process and the district’s visiting teacher has been extremely beneficial. The school has also tried to make resources from outside agencies available to school families. McIlvaine has partnered with the Food Bank of Delaware to participate in the backpack program for weekend meals. They have also partnered with the Center for Mental Wellness to support families that need additional therapy or counseling services to support student and family mental health. Additionally, they have provided several school families with information about Angel Food Ministries, clothing banks, and outreach services.
- In an era of vast economic needs, their school has hosted a variety of family-oriented fundraisers to support parent programs – the school’s building budget only covers fixed costs. To address the need for extra funds, the school administration has written several grants and the school has hosted different family-oriented fundraisers. For example, McIlvaine held a “Chick-Fil-A” night in September, and the money raised through the event was used to purchase supplies for the monthly “parent parties.” The event also allowed students and their families to see the staff outside of the school setting (which they enjoyed immensely). They also hosted a “Breakfast with Santa” at their local Applebee’s to serve the same purpose. Funds raised through the breakfast event were also be used to purchase additional supplies for the Alphabet Army.

Questions?

For more information on what McIlvaine ECC is doing, and how it may work in your school, please contact: Sherry Kijowski, Principal, at sherry.kijowski@cr.k12.de.us or at 302-335-5039.

2012



Bayard Middle School

District: Christina

City: Wilmington

Grades: 6-8

Number of Students: 463



Overview:

Bayard Middle School is located in downtown Wilmington and serves students in grades 6-8. The mission of Bayard Middle School is to foster a school community which provides student-centered learning experiences that will meet the needs of lifelong learners by providing community and family partnerships, engaging students academically through relationship, relevance and rigor; and creating a motivational learning environment through the use of technology.

Challenges:

- Lack of meaningful two-way communication with their parents
- Partnerships between Bayard and the parents
- Community support

Solutions:

- Lack of meaningful two-way communication with parents is a challenge that Bayard works hard to overcome. In order to best meet and overcome this challenge, Bayard has developed a communication protocol which outlines school activities and various outreach modes of communication to contact parents on a consistent basis. The Parent Resource Center, Home Access Center, and the Cyber Café all address the need for additional and meaningful communication.
- Partnerships between Bayard and the parents are another challenge that Bayard addresses. In light of this challenge, Bayard created the Parent Café, which is an informal support group to partner with parents/guardians to help them to become active school partners.
- Bayard also recognized that community support is a real challenge in their school. To address this need, they increased the number of community members and organizations to support their families at school. They host community outreach meetings, resource fairs, and a “Back to School Barbeque” to help recruit additional community partners.
- *Parent Resource Center:* Designated parent room where parents and guardians can hold meetings, obtain parent resource library materials and community information, and have access to a computer lab.

- *Walk Through Wednesdays*: Every third Wednesday, Bayard hosts an open house to encourage incoming families and community members to learn about our school community. This consists of a meet and greet with the Principal, a gallery walk of academic, support and extracurricular programs, building tour, and classroom observation.
- *Family Fun Night*: Each content area department (i.e. Math, English Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Expressive Arts) sponsors one Family Fun Night per school year related to their subject area which showcases students. These programs assist families in understanding how to support their student's learning at home and school.
- *Parent/Cyber Café*: A parent support group that meets monthly to discuss topics and issues families request information on to support their students. The following sessions have previously covered:
 - ◊ Get the 411 on Home Access Center (HAC)
 - ◊ Selecting the Right Fit for High School
 - ◊ Maximizing your Income Tax Refund
 - ◊ Understanding Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS)
 - ◊ Get the 411 on Cyberbullying, Sexting and Texting

Questions?

For more information on what Bayard Middle School is doing, and how it may work in your school, please contact: Donald Patton, Principal, at pattond@christina.k12.de.us or at 302-429-4118.

2012



Gallagher Elementary School

District: Christina

City: Newark

Grades: K-5

Number of Students: 528



Overview:

Gallagher Elementary School serves a diverse population of approximately 545 students living in the Newark area in grades K-5. Gallagher's mission statement promises to provide all students with an exemplary education, which will meet the diverse needs of individual students in a positive and safe environment while preparing them for academic success, productive citizenship, and lifelong learning.

Challenges:

- Time availability of parents
- Transportation for parents
- Families whose first language is not English

Solutions:

- Among Gallagher families, there has been an explosion of families whose first language is not English. Since nearly all classroom instruction, homework assignments and textbooks are in English, it is easy to understand why non-English speaking parents feel at a disadvantage in supporting their children's school work. Beyond the language barrier, there are also significantly different cultural norms and expectations that can affect the way non-English speaking parents interact with schools and teachers. To overcome this very real involvement barrier, Gallagher tries to provide help to parents in their native languages to every extent possible, including International Night, where families come together to learn about other cultures.
- Gallagher does their best to be as flexible as possible to accommodate the busy schedules of families. They provide transportation or hold meetings at convenient locations for families to make them more accessible. Their Mentor Program and the addition of two ELL Staff Members have been great assets to assist in supporting families. The staff at Gallagher has the role of supporting parental involvement by developing relationships and serving as a resource to their families. Gallagher also calls and holds conferences on different days and times, offers communication by phone, email, and will go to the workplace of the parent if the parent is unable to come to school.

- Gallaher uses “Parents as Partners,” in which parents serve on all the school committee’s such as Code of Conduct Review Committee, PBS and Calendar Review Committees. Each teacher at Gallaher sends out at least two positive postcards home to parents each month. The principal of Gallaher ensures that communication remains open with parents and hosts a coffee with all parents on a monthly basis, gives parents daily school agendas, and sends home weekly progress reports. Gallaher also hosts a “Donuts for Parents” in their parking lot on the first day of school, personally welcoming families back to a great new school year. Gallaher sends home a monthly newsletter as well as updating their school website informing parents of all of the great things occurring at school. Those newsletters include information about the concepts that are being taught, how those concepts can be reinforced and practiced at home, a schedule of after-school help sessions, and news about a special citizenship program in which kids earn points for positive behaviors. The newsletters also include news of upcoming in-service sessions and special projects parents might want to get involved in.

Questions?

For more information on what Gallaher Elementary School is doing, and how it may work in your school, please contact: Jacqueline Lee, Principal, at leej7@christina.k12.de.us or 302-454-2464

2013



Laurel High School

District: Laurel

City: Laurel

Grades: 9-12

Number of Students: 479



Overview:

Laurel High School is located in Laurel and serves students in grades 9-12. Laurel High School's mission statement promises that all students will be actively engaged in learning through the use of research-based instructional strategies.

Challenges:

- Engaging parents to participate in parent-teacher conferences
- Communicating with parents
- Poverty among students

Solutions:

- Laurel was holding "standard" parent-teacher conferences and getting very low turnout, so they began redesigning methods for selecting students for parent-teacher conferences by creating a new form that looks at many indicators, not simply grades. All faculty members were fully invested, and reached out to the parents of all targeted students. After conferences were scheduled, faculty produced individualized folders to present at each meeting - this included attendance data, DCAS data, STAR data (reading diagnostics), report cards, discipline data, and current progress reports. In addition, specific feedback from each of the eight teachers assigned to a student was incorporated in the folders. Parents were provided all of these artifacts to keep, along with a "Formula for Success" sheet that provided specific information on how they could support their child. Conferences were closed with precise student goals and parent follow-up actions. Laurel now hosts over 100 parent-teacher conferences and holds a large, one-night event to accommodate as many parents as possible.
- Laurel also faced the common challenge of reaching parents. In their school population, phone numbers and addresses change often. They use Parent-Teacher Conferences to obtain accurate information and to express to parents the need to keep phone numbers and addresses updated with the school. In addition, they use creative ways to reach parents for these conferences – asking students, family members, and community members to help them in making contact with hard to reach parents.

- Laurel realizes that poverty provides its own barriers – mostly in regards to transportation and diet. In 2013 Laurel addressed this challenge by providing refreshments through local charitable organizations; however, they have decided to become more aggressive in tackling the poverty barriers. In 2014 they continued to offer refreshments, but also offered transportation as well. Laurel continues to offer their parent resource room.

Questions?

For more information on what Laurel High School is doing, and how it may work in your school, please contact: Amber Deiter, Principal, at amber.deiter@laurel.k12.de.us or at 302-875-6120.

2013



Allen Frear Elementary School

District: Caesar Rodney

City: Camden

Grades: K-5

Number of Students: 658



Overview:

Allen Frear Elementary School is located right outside of downtown Dover, in Camden, and serves students in grades K-5. Frear's mission statement promises to remain committed to the mission of preparing the students for a successful, productive, and purposeful life. They believe that every student is unique and can learn.

Challenges:

- Scheduling demands of parents
- Engaging their parents in order to remove the financial strains for some of their families
- Parents' beliefs and trust within the school system

Solutions:

- Frear took on the common challenge of meeting the scheduling demands of parents by providing many different opportunities throughout the month, during the evening, to allow working parents to attend. In addition, many of their teachers easily accommodate the schedules of parents by coming to school early, staying after school, or being available during the day. If a parent is willing to be involved, Frear is willing to do everything possible to accommodate his or her schedule. At Frear they also value the effectiveness of two-way communication. Not only do they post school information, PTA information and student successes in the building, but they also utilize various communication tactics such as Global Connect Phone Calls, notes home, and their school website. This provides parents with the necessary information to be informed about events happening in the school and the opportunity to provide suggestions, comments, or to ask questions.
- Frear recognizes that they need to continue engaging their parents in order to remove the financial strains for some of their families. Therefore, they strive to make all of their events free or at a very low cost to allow as many participants as possible. At many of their events, they offer food and refreshments, again either free of charge or at a low cost.
- Frear also engages their parents in an attempt to change some of the parents' beliefs and trust within the school system. They want the evening events to be fun and serve as an opportunity for families to spend quality time together. Frear typically has over 100 participants attending each of their monthly events. This is in addition to parents who have attended conferences, classroom events, volunteer in the school, or made contact with the teachers via phone or email.

- *Frear's Frequent Flyers Reward Card:* One of the programs they implemented was "Frear's Frequent Flyers" parental involvement reward card. The "Frear's Frequent Flyers" card was developed to encourage and reward parents for taking an active role in the school community. Each parent received a card for each of their children at the school. Parents earn stamps by being an active participant in their child's education. Stamps can accumulate by parents attending monthly school events, conferences, PTA meetings, emailing/writing notes to their child's teacher, eating lunch with the child, viewing the website and commenting on various topics and volunteering. Once a parent earns five stamps on his or her "Frear's Frequent Flyers" card, the card is turned in to be raffled to win various prizes such as movie tickets, gift certificates to dinner and other items donated by local businesses and community members.
- *Parent-Teacher-Student-School Compact:* This compact is given to students in the beginning of the year to enforce that education is a shared responsibility and that they must all work together. The compact specifies the expectations for each individual and is signed by all parties (teacher, student, parent and principal) and kept on file at the school.
- *Monthly Events:* Each month a fun and engaging family event is planned for an opportunity for parents to participate in various activities with their child or children. They have scheduled various events such as a Movie Night, Father/Daughter Dance, Mother/Son Sport Challenge, "The Brain Show"- an interactive game night, Talent Show, Family Fun Night, Family Reading Night and a Spring into Fitness event. These events are designed to be interactive, engaging, and free or very low cost to encourage the participation from as many families as possible.
- *Achievement Liaison Teacher (ALT) Role:* Allen Frear's ALT supports parental involvement with students' academic success through various needs such as: teaching parents how to monitor student progress, helping parents understand the school's curricula and/or assessments, providing resources to parents to encourage additional academic support at home, providing information about the essential components of reading or math instruction to enable parents to support the instructional practices used by the teacher, and attend weekly meetings with teachers in various grades level to be actively involved in the educational process. The Achievement Liaison Teacher also collaborates with teachers, staff, and parents to plan and coordinate the various family events that they host at Allen Frear.

Questions?

For more information on what Allen Frear Elementary School is doing, and how it may work in your school, please contact: Tara Faircloth, Principal, at tara.faircloth@cr.k12.de.us or at 302-697-3270.

2014



Dover High School

District: Capital

City: Dover

Grades: 9-12

Number of Students: 1,696



Overview:

Dover High School is located in Dover and serves students in grades 9-12. Dover High School promises to inspire and guide students with the support of parents and the community to become productive and contributing citizens.

Challenges:

- Availability and time of the parents
- Lack of parental awareness of school systems and programs available
- Effective communication

Solutions:

- Dover High meets the common and daunting challenge of working with the availability and time of the parents. At Dover High, program activities are held at a variety of times in the day, evening, weekends and in different schools. Staff conduct home visits as needed, and or meet with parents at local places (libraries, homes and agencies). Locations may vary according to the family's transportation needs.
- Dover High works to overcome the lack of parental awareness of school systems and programs available. In order to meet this need Dover offers resources such as a DCAS Workshop— a family friendly program providing childcare, transportation, dinner, and incentives (free tickets to athletic games for attending workshop and other school events, door prizes).
- Effective communication is a real issue in most schools, but especially high schools. To meet this need, Dover has implemented a variety of communication methods to ensure that parents of all levels are reached. Examples are things such as flyers, the Alert now reminder, email blast to all families, and ads in the newspaper. These are all methods used to advertise events that parents may be involved in and important information about the school in general. Dover recognizes that not all parents communicate using the same methods; therefore, it is necessary to provide various modes of communication. The following are communication methods used regularly:
 - ◇ Online monthly Parent Newsletter (also send out hard copies by email, letters, and text)
 - ◇ Weekly Sunday Automated ALERT calls
 - ◇ Booster Presidents monthly meetings
 - ◇ Email list serve after ALERT NOW messages, calls are made to remind parents
 - ◇ Website (postings of school events)/ Local newspaper Ads/ Radio Announcements

- *Parent Academy:* Parent Academy consists of workshops and events offered based on parent feedback. More than 50 parent workshops and events have been offered district wide since August 2012.
- *Parent Engagement Staff Development Training:* Staff and administration play a major role in the success of parent involvement. In Fall 2013, Dover High school staff members participated in parent engagement training. The training “Parent Communication 101” focused on building trusting relationships with parents, having more positive than negative interactions with parents and how to have difficult conversations. As a result of this training, the 4-3-3 method was implemented. Teachers will contact parents of students in each of the following categories: 3 students who have shown improvement, 3 students who are struggling and 4 students who are successful. 139 staff members attended this and in-house parent involvement training in 2013.
- *Consistent Deliberate Communication with parents:* The DHS Co-Principal of Administration publishes a monthly Parent Newsletter intended to keep parents and the school community informed. The newsletter provides information regarding upcoming of school events, and highlights school successes. In addition to the monthly newsletter, another mode of parent community that has proven to be successful at DHS, are weekly alert now messages. On Sundays and Wednesdays of each week, an automated message is sent out to families. The messages share upcoming events, communicate any schedule changes and highlight athletic and academic successes for that week. Automated messages can also be accessed on the DHS website.
- *Mentoring Program:* Dover High school runs a mentoring program that serves approximately 40 students. Adults are recruited from within the school district and the community to work one-on-one with students for 30 minutes to an hour each week. Of the mentors currently serving, 10 are DHS parents. In addition, mentoring events are hosted to bring the mentors and families of the students together.
- *School and District level Parent Recognition Programs:* Each year during a school level recognition ceremony, parents are awarded for their time and other contributions donated to the school in addition, more than 30 parents and 50 businesses and community partners were recognized in a district wide awards ceremony.

2014



Postlethwait Middle School

District: Caesar Rodney

City: Camden

Grades: 6-8

Number of Students: 816



Overview:

Postlethwait Middle School is located right outside of downtown Dover in Camden and serves students in grades 6-8. Postlethwait's mission statement promises to promote, enhance, and sustain student academic achievement in a safe school community and to assist the community of learners in becoming responsible for their character development and academic skills.

Challenges:

- Lack of time parents have available due to work and other commitments
- Effective means of communication
- Many parents feel as though they are no longer needed when their child hits middle-school or high school age and desires more independence

Solutions:

- Postlethwait considers their most daunting challenge to be the lack of parental involvement due to work and other commitments. Their parents often hold more than one job or work hours that don't easily coincide with school activities. One way they are addressing this challenge is by providing parents with a variety of opportunities to connect with the school. For example, they held three Summer Bingo events to provide parents more flexibility. Parents are also given a choice as to what conference time-frame best suits their schedules. School-wide parent conference opportunities are offered not only during traditional after-school hours, but also in the evenings and early afternoon by building half-day conference schedules into the school calendar. On those days, students attend half-days so that teachers can accommodate parent schedules for conferencing. Conferences occur each marking period after grades are issued. In addition, some parent events are scheduled on evenings when sports competitions or other events are already taking place at an earlier time. Instead of asking parents to come to the school twice, they simply provide the convenience of dinner and offer programs or resources afterwards; therefore, they capitalize on the parents that they already have on the campus. When they do hold events, entire families are encouraged to participate including younger siblings. This is convenient for parents and helps Postlethwait to build early bridges to future students.

- Postlethwait works hard to find the most effective means of communication. They have parents that are very tech savvy and check Home Access on their cell phones on a daily basis while others may not have home phones that are operational, but regularly check their email accounts at work. Postlethwait utilizes every means of communication possible to connect with parents about school events and student progress. For example, their homework hotline offers families the ability to call all teacher extensions 24 hours a day and hear daily homework assignments over the phone. Many teachers maintain current websites or send weekly emails that discuss classroom happenings. Each Postlethwait family also receives periodic Global Connect phone calls which are personal messages from the principal reminding them of upcoming events.
- Many parents who were diligently engaged with their elementary students feel as though they are no longer needed when their child hits middle-school age and desires more independence. The curriculum becomes more challenging than in elementary school and some parents may feel ill-equipped to assist their children academically. Postlethwait has a 6th grade orientation night that helps to ease this transition. Furthermore, all parent nights include information on how parents can help their students in each of the core content areas. Staging events outside of the school, at Fifer Orchards for example, helps parents that may not feel comfortable in the school setting access information about student achievement in a less intimidating environment.
- *Postlethwait Summer Bingo:* This initiative was designed to encourage students and their parents to participate in highly engaging academic activities designed to keep them reading, writing, and thinking over the summer with an interactive game format. Before the end of the school year, students and parents were given a free summer reading book and a Summer Bingo card which contained various academic activities. Parents would sign off on the activities and record their child's progress in order to get "Bingo" and bring the card to a checkpoint to be reviewed by a staff member. Each month of summer vacation had a checkpoint at a different location in the community including Kent County Public Library, John Dickinson Plantation, and the Wyoming Peach Festival. Students getting "Bingo" would be eligible for a prize drawing which included iTunes gift cards, Beats by Dre headphones, and a Kindle Fire.
- *ALT Program:* - Every school in the Caesar Rodney School district participates in the Achievement Liaison Teacher (ALT) program and has a building-level teacher leader who is charged with facilitating parent communication, enhancing student achievement, and improving teacher quality. The ALT at Postlethwait collects and shares achievement data on students to make informed decisions for Response to Intervention (RTI) programming, coordinates parent communication and events, models current best practices in classrooms, and collaborates with district personnel and contracted specialists to improve instruction and increase student achievement at the school.
- *Year-Round Parent Events:* Throughout the year, Postlethwait hosts a variety of themed parent nights during which parents and students participate in various content-based activities. Parent Nights that have been conducted within the last year include:
 - ◊ *6th Grade Sneak a Peek Night:* Before school opens, parents and students have the opportunity to visit the school and participate in an interactive scavenger hunt which includes meeting key staff members and navigating to important locations in the building. This experience allows students to become acclimated to the campus prior to the first day. In addition, select teachers visit the feeder schools to see life through the eyes of incoming 6th graders in order to better facilitate their academic success in middle school and communicate new expectations to parents.

- ◇ *Family Fall Fest at Fifer Orchards:* Parents and students attend an evening of family fun at Fifer Orchards, a local grower who has partnered with our district to provide fresh, locally grown vegetables for our school lunches. The farm hosts a variety of family-friendly games and fall-themed activities, but also educates students and their parents about agriculture, nutrition, and the value of a healthy, active lifestyle. This venue provides middle school students the opportunity to socialize with their families and peers outside of the school campus. Over 75% of the Postlethwait staff attended in 2014 and volunteered their time without compensation to park cars, serve food, monitor the entrance gate, and chaperone the fall-themed venues. This gave our staff the opportunity to establish positive, meaningful relationships with parents early in the school year.

Questions?

For more information on what Postlethwait Middle School is doing, and how it may work in your school, please contact: Derek Prillaman, Principal, at derek.prillaman@cr.k12.de.us or at 302-698-8410.