



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION VISTA PROJECT

2008-2009

PROMISING PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES



Site: *Grove Elementary School*

Partnership Practice: *Family Math Night*

VISTA: *Nicole Stachurski*

Grove Elementary School held its first Family Math Night on a Monday in May. Though considered an annual event, it has passed through many hands and this year's goal was to make the event more sustainable. With one of the goals as family fun, attendees began the night at an estimation station and prize table. This helped kick off the night to get the students excited. Maps were provided so that families knew where to find the room that fit their child's educational tier. Teachers were stationed in each room facilitating level appropriate activities. Attendees were also invited to peruse the new computer lab and play fun and educational games online. Also, families could view SmartBoard presentations. They were also given handouts to take home with math activities and websites listed. Families could make trail mix and proportional punch in the cafeteria or play card and dice games in the gym, where Dance Dance Revolution was available as well. They could also build marshmallow skyscrapers in the art room or do origami in the homework club room. At the end of the night, students took home packets of information to help extend the learning outside of the classroom.

Site: *Wausau School District Pre-K Program*

Partnership Practice: *Community Family Nights*

VISTA: *Christina Briggs*

In addition to the traditional family nights that have been held in the past at the school, four family nights were organized to take place outside of the school building setting, in local *community* spots. The community and organizations contacted as partners for the family nights included: YMCA, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Marathon County Public Library, and the School Forest. When calling, I asked for the person who could give me more information about partnering for an event, including available dates, times, costs, possible activities, etc. We then set up the events dates and times, what the event would look like including what activities would be offered, snacks or food, staffing needs, set-up and materials lists. These events are beneficial to students as they allowed them to experience new and exciting things in their own community. It also gave families the opportunity to get out of the house to learn and have fun together.

Site: *Milwaukee Public Library*

Partnership Practice: *Center Street Library and Forest Home Library Advisory Councils*

VISTA: *Penny Bruskin*

To put together an Advisory Council to better engage community members in shared ownership of their local libraries, I started off conducting an "Asset Map" of neighborhood resources using Google maps. I then asked branch librarians about any suggestions they had for increasing partnerships. Since then, word of mouth has helped our Advisory Councils grow in size and visibility. Every single council member was informed about the goal of increasing community involvement and partnerships at the library. They were also told that the sustainability of the councils is dependent on community participation and ownership. Since the first initial meetings, they councils meet monthly to discuss ways to increase communication among neighborhood agencies, libraries, community members, and schools. The members take turns leading the group at various times and meetings are hosted at various times and sites.

Site: *Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee*

Partnership Practice: *Harvest Fest/Spring Fling Family Math and Science Nights*

VISTA: *Brendan Gants*

BEAM has held family math and science nights twice this year: once in November ("Harvest Fest") and once in April ("Spring Fling"). Each event followed a format that could be easily replicated by other schools, with some time devoted to individual math and science activities run by teachers and some time devoted to a full-group presentation. For the individual activities, students were given a "passport to learn" that could be exchanged for a raffle ticket after they had completed enough activities. A book give-away was also held at each event, with every student in attendance receiving a free book. The events took place in the evening between 5:30-8:30, and turnout was excellent—around 175 students and parents attended Harvest Fest and over 200 attended Spring Fling. These evenings were held in the school cafeteria and gym, with math and science activities set up on individual tables run by teacher volunteers. Families spent much of the night doing those activities together, and then attended the full-group presentation. Dinner was also provided at each event.

Site: *Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee*

Partnership Practice: *ATP Committees*

VISTA: *Brendan Gants*

ATP (Action Team for Partnerships) meetings have been held monthly at BEAM this year since October. Since our second meeting in November, we have divided our Action Team into committees to work on specific projects. Each of our four committees focuses on a different type of family involvement, and each follows a One-Year Action Plan of its own. The committees meet outside of regular ATP meetings as needed, but all committees meet briefly during ATP meetings and also report their progress to the full ATP. Four main committees were established, each focused on a different type of family involvement: fatherhood, diversity and special student needs, tips for learning at home, and community outreach. Each of these committees selected a chair and developed a One-Year Action Plan. The ATP has elected its own representatives to run the group, including a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and community outreach coordinator. As a further step towards the sustainability of this large Action Team, BEAM has also developed a "classroom parent" program. Each classroom has, or will soon have, one parent volunteer whose responsibility it is to call the other parents in their child's class to remind them of upcoming Action Team meetings. This will help drive turnout and keep our committees strong in the coming year.

Site: *School District of Rhinelander*

Partnership Practice: *Summer Storytime in the Park*

VISTA: *Casey Gauthier*

Summer Storytime in the Park was created to help the district's reading initiative of having every student reading at or above the third grade reading level by the time they transition into fourth grade. Also, the activity helps reduce summer reading loss by creating a welcoming reading environment in the parks and providing families with books and resources necessary to create that environment at home. Volunteers were recruited from a local store, and school district staff were emailed asking if they could volunteer some of their time for this practice. A book drive took place to secure reading materials for the summer, and free resources were ordered from the National Institute for Literacy. A short DVD was put together for parents by me and a class in the spring, sharing reading tips and modeling good reading. This DVD was also handed out with the resources. I showed up early every time, laying out blankets and organizing resources. The group divided into two and each volunteer read to a small group. After a few stories were read, we wrapped up by thanking everyone for coming and handing out the books and resources.

Site: *Wausau School District*

Partnership Practice: *Building a Foundation for Parent and Community Involvement*

VISTA: *Roxane Hagedorn*

After reviewing our district's current practices with volunteers and conducting research and analysis of other school districts we have created a volunteer and community involvement program called O.N.E. (Our Network for Education). The first thing undertaken was the Board of Education policy for volunteers in schools. This was done through extensive research of other school districts within the state of Wisconsin. We also purchased volunteer management software from a company called Volunteer Impact. This web-based software will allow us to display volunteer opportunities online. It also will allow volunteers to fill out a volunteer profile as well as sign up for opportunities online. Orientation materials have also been created, including a volunteer handbook, a guidebook for school staff working with volunteers, a volunteer profile and an instructional sheet explaining how the web-based volunteer system works. A recent graphic design graduate designed a logo for us pro bono. The logo will assist us in branding our new program. A rollout of the program has been established for next school year, with some preliminary rollout already this school year. We will rollout the program at four elementary schools next fall and grow from there to the rest of our elementary schools and then to our middle, charter and high schools (21 in all). To make this a sustainable program, funding has been secured through a federal grant for a part-time Volunteer and Community Involvement Coordinator. This position will start at the beginning of the 2009-1010 school year.

Site: *Lincoln Elementary School*

Partnership Practice: *Summer Opportunities Family Night*

VISTA: *Renee Hinn*

This event was held for the benefit of Lincoln Elementary families; we provided information about summer opportunities for enrichment and childcare in the Lincoln Elementary gym. Lincoln Elementary shares district information about summer school every year in the late spring; this year we just expanded on that to include other opportunities in the community. First, our Action Team had a meeting to discuss parental involvement opportunities and what parents want; a big issue was childcare and, with summer coming up, we knew that concern would only grow. Then, we connected this concern with the upcoming summer school information, which Lincoln Elementary always shares anyway. We thought it may be neat and beneficial to turn what was traditionally an information session into an interactive event about all of the different opportunities going on over the summer. The ATP (Action Team for Partnerships) brainstormed to see who in the community may want to be involved. Our list included the Recreation Department, Oshkosh Public Library, Winnebago County 4-H, Camp Invention, Boys and Girls Club, and the coordinator of Oshkosh's Summer School. Calls, e-mails, and meetings with these organizations explained our event, and most were willing to come to the school, speak for 5-10 minutes about what they were offering, and set up a table/booth in the gym to provide a convention-style atmosphere. Families could hear what different organizations were doing, then walk around to talk to the coordinators, ask questions, get sign up materials, and have a translator available. Since attendance at our family events has been down recently, our principal had the idea to use our Children's Foundation money to buy a family Pool Pass that we could give away as an incentive for families to attend. Finally, we recruit staff to help set up, run, and clean up the event.

Site: *Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee*

Partnership Practice: *Sister School Program*

VISTA: *Stephanie Jung*

The BEAM Sister School Partnership with Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Menomonee Falls (a suburban school) bridged two communities to make the holidays more special for all families. Thomas Jefferson Middle School collected toys and books for students and families at BEAM through donations from students, staff, and families. This enabled us to give out holiday baskets to twenty-one BEAM families in need, containing food, clothing and toys. We will also be creating a "Family Closet" in our Family Resource Center, in which we will keep some of the used clothing and toy that families make take as needed and contribute to as able. We were also able to give away a book to every child at the beginning of second semester. In addition we put together a "Books for Bears" program to promote reading outside of the classroom due to the donations from our sister school. With this program, the students read a book, do a "mind map" to organize their thoughts, write a paragraph about the book, and do a small project. For each book a student completes, they can receive a stuffed animal, or that student can "bank" the book towards receiving a larger stuffed animal. Given the importance of reciprocity, BEAM families, staff, and students wanted to do something in return for Thomas Jefferson Middle School families. BEAM students decided to make a giant book with valentines for the students at Thomas Jefferson Middle School. Through this partnership we hope we can continue to link two communities and share the resources.

Site: *Howe School/Howe Neighborhood Family Resource Center*

Partnership Practice: *Get to Know Your Neighbor Night*

VISTA: *Kelly Karls*

All school families were invited to attend a "Get to Know Your Neighbor" Night at Howe School. The event aimed to connect neighbors and school families to positively impact school climate and create lasting friendships and networks. It was held at the school from 5:00-7:00PM with a dinner being served first followed by diversity activities for all families to see the many cultures represented by their neighbors and Howe School families. Families were seated with other families that lived very near to them. On each table were cards that provided some questions that families could talk about, including favorite movies, city of origin, and other icebreaker questions. Staff members circulated during the dinner, acting as facilitators to encourage dialogue and connect neighbors to each other. Community members were invited to come in and present cultural activities and demonstrations for the families to take part in. The night ended with dessert and, hopefully, new friendships.

Site: *U.S. Grant Elementary School*

Partnership Practice: *Community Partnership Event*

VISTA: *Robyn Krimke*

This year's event was held on Saturday May 30, 2009. This is one of the best practices the school has because it involves everyone; this means the students, parents, staff, community members, agencies, and businesses. The event is held at our school both inside and out. There are over eighty resource tables, careers on wheels area, games, music, dancing, and lunch. This event is a resourceful, educational, and social event that it meets many needs for many different people. We also partner with the Hunger Task Force and United States Post Office to host a food drive that day. Our last food drive our school raised over 5,000 non-perishable items. A local hospital even participated; they pulled up in a small pick up truck filled with cases of soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, deodorant, diapers and baby food to donate.

Site: *South Madison Health and Family Center – Harambee*

Partnership Practice: *Reading in the Waiting Room*

VISTA: *Kelly Martyka*

The Reading on the Waiting Room program supports a literacy rich waiting room, as well as encourages children and families to delve into the wonderful world of reading. It provides children with a book to take home to build their personal libraries. The volunteers that do the reading also model positive and effective reading strategies for parents and families. It's actually a very simple program. We work to get donations of books from local organizations such as RSVP, student groups at universities, First Book, anonymous community members and through online advertising sites. Each book is labeled with a small note that the book is provided through SMHFC Coordinating Office. Each reading volunteer comes in, decides which books to put on the cart, often filled to capacity. They then push the carts into the waiting room and let the frenzy of reading begin. Many children are attracted to the books. Each child is allowed to take one book home with them. The readers also work to provide quality, effective and positive reading behaviors to parents and families along the lines of what to expect from a two year old, who could eat the book, versus a five year old, who will read the book to you instead of being read to. Lastly, the volunteers track how many children came to take books, the number of books taken, the reading level of the books and what language the books were in.

Site: *James E. Dottke Alternative High School*

Partnership Practice: *25th Anniversary Celebration*

VISTA: *Chad Olle*

This year was the 25th anniversary of the high school. To celebrate, we invited parents, alumni, board members, and community members to visit the school and meet with teachers and students to look at schoolwork and to discuss what the alternative education program has meant to them. Students and staff greeted parents, alumni, and community members as they toured the school and looked at students work from the past and present. The Dottke Action Team (DAT) went into the community and collected donations for the raffle, which made it a lot easier to promote the event in the community. The Action Team has only been up and running for about six months so we don't yet have a community member involved. We used this event to recruit alumni, who have moved on to work in the community, for the Action Team.

Site: *Spooner Middle School*

Partnership Practice: *Souper Bowl of Caring*

VISTA: *Michelle Traxel*

The Souper Bowl of Caring is a week-long event that involves the students, staff, and community members. The school district was involved with a food drive, chili feed, and silent auction. All of these events were to help benefit area non-profit organizations, with hopes to increase awareness about area poverty. This was the second time Spooner was involved in this national event. Our team started planning these events a few months in advance. Many letters were written to solicit donations for our Silent Auction, so we began to send those out early. We then started to recruit volunteers to help plan out the week's events, as well as get the word out to the community and school staff about what this project is all about. As people found out about it, a positive reaction came of it as we began to receive hundreds of donations, such as money, food, silent auction items, etc. At the beginning week, we got the students pumped up about the food drive and had competitions; whichever connections class from each grade received the most food donations would win an ice cream sundae party. Many families took part in this event and came in to enjoy chili and bid on great silent auction items.

Site: *Wisconsin Educational Opportunities Program – GEAR UP*

Partnership Practice: *Holding an Informational Parent Meeting*

VISTA: *Brittany Williams*

The GEAR UP / EIP office held two sessions of an informational meeting for the parents and guardians of students enrolled in the program, and for parents who simply were looking for an opportunity to learn more about GEAR UP / EIP. Both sessions of the parent meetings followed a similar format. We began with registration, so parents had a thirty minute time frame to show up, sign in, look over materials we had available, register for translating equipment if necessary, eat the food and beverages we had set out, and to socialize with members of the GEAR UP / EIP staff, volunteers from the Youth Leadership Board, and with each other. We also had a slide show with photos from various GEAR UP / EIP events running so they could see evidence of the program and their children in action. We kicked off the meeting with an icebreaker to help everyone feel comfortable, and then staff presented information on the program. Following that, parents were broken into smaller groups to take part in an abridged version of PT3 (Parents and Teachers Talking Together). Concerns were addressed in the large group, which gave us a great opportunity to talk about creating a Parent Advisory Board. The meeting ended with parents filling out feedback forms.

Site: *Wisconsin Educational Opportunities Program*

Partnership Practice: *Phone Calls to Parents*

VISTA: *Brittany Williams*

GEAR UP / EIP instituted structured and regular phone calls to parents to assist with a number of projects: completing GEAR UP parent surveys, advertising for upcoming events, soliciting parental feedback, and building relationships with the parents involved in our program. Members of the GEAR UP / EIP office made regular calls to parents each week. At first, our goal was to complete parent surveys, which are a requirement of our grant. After that was completed, we utilized the parent calls to publicize upcoming events and to get feedback from parents about the program. Students from the program were also involved in the parent calling, which was very effective outreach.

Site: *Kosciuszko Montessori School*

Partnership Practice: *Thanksgiving Family Fun Night*

VISTA: *Kim Yoder*

The event was for all of the families and staff at Kosciuszko Montessori to celebrate Thanksgiving together and increase parent comfort level at the school. With the help of the VISTA and PTO, we organized a family fun night, which included a potluck dinner provided by families, crafts, and also a local dance instructor came to teach the children a traditional Mexican dance. We held this event at the school in two locations: the cafeteria for the potluck and the upper gym for the crafts and the dancing. Families were asked to bring in dishes for the potluck; classrooms were assigned different types of dishes to bring so that we had a variety of food. We also had a few local businesses donate food and drinks. Parents and staff greeted families at the door and directed them to the room where parents needed to fill out the parent climate survey. The parents that filled out the survey were given a raffle ticket. After that, families went to the cafeteria to enjoy the potluck and listen to the principal and a PTO parent speak. Following the meal, families went to different craft stations, then the students were taught a traditional Mexican dance by a local dance instructor.

Site: *Dane County Transition School*

Partnership Practice: *Pay It Forward: Service Learning and Community Service Project*

VISTA: *Dustin Young*

Our Pay It Forward program at DCTS is an ongoing initiative and experience for the benefit of our students, their families, and the community. Based on the concept of Paying It Forward, this initiative focuses on providing help to those in need by promoting kindness and community service. Our kick-off event was held on February 21, 2009. In order to spread the word about our program, we enlisted the support of over eighty area businesses and organizations that volunteered to distribute promotional materials, which included brochures, awareness bracelets and business cards. Since the kick-off day, the students and staff have engaged in a number of service projects in order to help spread our school's message by taking action. These activities have included area neighborhood clean-up and building handicapped accessible organic gardening beds.