

The background of the cover features a layered, torn-paper effect with various shades of blue and white. The top layer is a light, speckled blue. Below it is a darker, textured blue layer. The bottom right corner shows a white layer with vertical blue stripes. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant.

Selected Exemplary Family and Community Involvement Programs

in Palm Beach and Broward Counties

**By Susan B. Bernstein,
Genie Osorio, and Karen B. Greenberg**

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments 2
Introduction 3
Objectives 3
Methods 3
Interview Questions 4

SECTION 1

Palm Beach County Elementary Schools 5
 Banyan Creek Community Elementary School 5
 Jupiter Elementary School 7
 Morikami Park Elementary School 10
 Village Academy 12
 Wynnebrook Elementary 15

SECTION 2

Broward County Elementary Schools 18
 Coral Springs Elementary 18
 Country Hills Elementary 20
 Deerfield Beach Elementary 21
 Indian Trace Elementary 23
 Parkside Elementary 25

SECTION 3

Broward County Middle Schools 27
 Background on Middle Schools 27
 Falcon Cove Middle School 28
 Indian Ridge Middle School 30
 Parkway Middle School for the Performing Arts 32

Questions to Ponder 34
Findings 34
Conclusions 35
Overall Reflections 36
Recommended Websites 37

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Susan, Genie, & Karen

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this monograph is to investigate and share exemplary school, family, and community partnerships. The goal is that school personnel who are seeking to improve their involvement can adapt some of these programs to fit their schools' needs.

“When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or parents' educational level” (Decker and Decker, 2000). Wherry (2000) found that 100% of the recent research on family and community involvement indicates that families have an impact on their children's school achievement. Epstein (1991) determined that students whose parents are involved in their education have fewer placements in special education, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in postsecondary education. Henderson and Mapp (2002) summarized the research evidence on family and community involvement to date indicating that there are significant benefits to schools that actively promote home-school collaboration.

The researchers hope that school leaders can take these ideas of exemplary family and community involvement programs and adapt them to their schools to increase their family and school partnerships. (Please note: In the research that follows the words family and parent are used interchangeably).

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research was to obtain samples of best practices by schools whose family and community involvement programs have already gained recognition through the Five Star School Award.

METHODS

The researchers of this study interviewed schools who had received the Five Star School Award by the Florida Department of Education. Schools earn this accolade based on their outstanding demonstration of the following criteria: business partnerships, school advisory council membership, student-community service, volunteers, and community involvement. The researchers contacted the principals of Five Star Schools and asked to interview either her, or her family and community involvement designee.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The researchers compiled a list of 10 interview questions, as follows:

1. What types of family and community involvement activities are practiced at your school?
2. Who coordinates these activities?
3. How does your school know if these activities are successful?
4. How do you solicit feedback from families about the activities?
5. What strategies do you employ for involving community members and businesses?
6. How are the costs of programs subsidized?
7. Do you believe there is any correlation between student achievement and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and family and community involvement in school?
8. What district family/business partnership requirements seem to work best for your school, and which do not work with your population?
9. What goals have you set for future involvement?
10. With limited resources, what type of family and community involvement would you want?

The researchers did not use the interview questions exclusively. Sometimes the meetings metamorphosed into an informal discussion instead of a formal interview. Other questions were often added to find out details of the activities and to solicit recommendations for other schools trying to implement what had been done at the school site.

The researchers investigated family involvement in 10 elementary schools and three middle schools in South Florida during the 2001-2002 school year. (Five elementary schools in Palm Beach County, five elementary schools in Broward County, and three middle schools in Broward County.)

A school was visited only if it was cross-referenced by more than one source as having an exemplary family and community involvement program. The researchers went into each school and brought a brochure explaining the project.

SECTION 1

Palm Beach County Elementary Schools

by: Susan B. Bernstein

Banyan Creek Community Elementary School

4243 Sabal Lakes Road

Delray Beach, FL 33445

(561) 638-2151

William J. Fay, *Principal*

Banyan Creek Elementary School's educational leader is principal William Fay, a former superintendent of a Boston-area school district. Banyan Creek's diverse student population speaks over 15 languages. The school is considered both a Gifted Center and an ESOL Center. The school has a waiting list of students wanting to attend. Mr. Fay believes the reason for the high demand to attend the school is the public perception that students are getting a private school education in a public school.

The school has 1,030 students: 425 (41%) are White, 468 (45%) are Black, 81 (8%) are Hispanic, and 56 (6%) are unclassified. There are 521 (51%) students who receive free or reduced lunch, 247 (24%) are Limited English Proficient (LEP), 46 (4.5%) are classified as Exceptional Student Education (ESE), and 228 (22%) are considered gifted.

Mr. Fay knows how well Banyan Creek students are served because when the fifth graders leave for middle schools all over the district, the middle school counselors tell him that Banyan Creek students are very well prepared. Mr. Fay believes that the reason they are prepared is the involvement of their parents in their education.

Although Mr. Fay oversees the central office, he believes in “team players” and quotes his role model, “It’s amazing how much you can accomplish when no one cares who gets the credit.” Mr. Fay makes everyone feel appreciated. He is proud that the school conveys a welcoming feeling to all who walk through its doors.

Many of Banyan Creek’s paraprofessionals work after school in the after care program. Computer trained, they work one-on-one with students in the computer lab. Mr. Fay also makes his itinerant teachers feel welcome by hosting department meetings for them.

Banyan Creek has several community partnerships. The Delray Police Department sponsors a program called ‘Kids and Cops,’ where at-risk children are identified and sent on monthly field trips with police officers. Banyan Creek also has university partnerships in which university students are sent to help in the elementary classrooms.

There is an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) that raises \$35,000 to \$40,000 annually. The School Advisory Council (SAC) has 35 members, 20 of whom are from the ESOL community. The ESOL Department and the Haitian employees have established a trust level with the Haitian parents that makes the parents feel welcome and needed. A translator is present at all school events and meetings.

Banyan Creek sponsors an honor roll breakfast each marking period and invites the parents of the honor roll students. Additionally, it has an after-school writing program to improve student scores on the FCAT.

The following are three family and community involvement programs that are unique to Banyan Creek:

MARKETING BANYAN CREEK

Mr. Fay believes family involvement is important and believes in the importance of marketing his school effectively. He believes school is a home away from home and should convey a “welcoming feeling.” He advocates a family atmosphere for everyone, including the teachers. His goal is that students experience quality time. He wants parents, students, and teachers to love to come to school, as he himself loves being at school. Mr. Fay strives to make sure parents feel especially welcome. He knows parents are the ones who have the vote to get more money for schools and that they support the schools they believe in. Mr. Fay makes sure he is accessible. No appointment is necessary to see him as long as he is not on the telephone or at a district meeting.

Mr. Fay promises to provide a good education in a safe environment and looks out for each student as if that student were his own. He believes that when students see their parents involved in school, they get the message that school is important.

Furthermore, discipline problems are miniscule when the parents are at school and see what their children are doing. Mr. Fay lets neighborhood associations meet at the school for free on the condition that their members keep an eye on the school whenever they walk or drive by. He has never had any vandalism at his school and he believes this is the reason why.

SCHOOL TOURS

Mr. Fay gives two tours of Banyan Creek each month for parents of prospective students and makes the tours fun by pretending to charge thirty nine cents per person. He explains to the prospective parents that his current parents, teachers, and students are his best marketing tool. During the tours he walks the families around the school, stopping to discuss particulars along the way. The parents learn the history of Banyan Creek. They go into the classrooms where their children will attend. Teachers talk to the visitors for a couple of minutes and then invite the parents to come back for half an hour with their children to sit in the classroom and see the instructional program at a later time.

RENDORI FAMILY DAY FUNDRAISER

Banyan Creek has a variety of family involvement programs. Some programs occur each year, and others are planned on an as-needed basis. One example of a program on an as-needed basis is the Rendori Family Day Fundraiser. The Rendori family has a kindergartner, a second grader, and a fifth grader in the school. Their house had burned down just before the holidays and they lost everything. The community and school personnel raised money, gifts, and basic essentials for the family.

Jupiter Elementary School

200 South Loxahatchee Drive

Jupiter, FL 33458

(561) 744-7979

Ann Wark, *Principal*

From 1923 to 1965 Jupiter Elementary was a first-to-twelfth-grade school. In 1966 it became an elementary school. Currently there are 493 students: 343 (70%) are White, 16 (3%) are Black, 112 (23%) are Hispanic, and 22 (4%) are unclassified. There are 221 (45%) students who receive free or reduced lunch, 98 (20%) are considered to be LEP, and 86 (17%) are classified as ESE with special needs.

Ms. Wark, the principal, explained that the children of doctors and lawyers attend other schools in Jupiter, but some of the children who attend Jupiter Elementary are the children of the maids and the cooks who work for the doctors and the lawyers. Jupiter Elementary is not a Title I school, but it is the poorest school in Jupiter. The area has many rental homes and a large ESOL population.

Ms. Wark believes that communication is vital and returns telephone calls as soon as possible. She sends home a newsletter called *Smoke Signals* every two weeks, and the teachers also send home weekly newsletters. As principal, Ms. Wark never says, “It can’t happen here.” She believes that safety in the school increases and discipline problems decrease when parents are involved!

Ms. Wark believes that the parents care even when they cannot or do not come to school; she believes that the school should do what it can to make them feel a part of it. She makes sure that there is a translator at all PTO meetings and attends all meetings herself. She also feels it helps that the PTO president is bilingual and is a go-getter. This PTO president had a separate PTO meeting at the beginning of the year for the non-English-speaking parents to encourage them to come to the main PTO meetings. Ms. Wark also believes in increasing family involvement one family at a time. Ms. Wark believes in going to parents if they do not come to the school and says, “You must show parents you care because otherwise they think that you don’t.”

Ms. Wark claims Jupiter Elementary gets some family involvement ideas from the “job alike” get-together, where all five of the principals of Jupiter-area schools come together and share ideas. They discuss common problems and solutions so that they do not have to reinvent the wheel.

Jupiter Elementary has many programs that involve the parents. Among them are Helping One Student To Succeed (HOSTS), Parent Power 3, Math Superstars, and the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Many of the parents who were originally involved in one program have become involved in others. For example, Parent Power 3 has a positive effect on making non-English-speaking parents feel comfortable in the school setting. This comfort level has increased the PTO membership.

The following are highlights of selected programs at Jupiter Elementary:

HELPING ONE STUDENT TO SUCCEED (HOSTS)

HOSTS is an academic mentoring program in which parents and volunteers work with fourth graders who are classified as LEP. The program is funded by a \$5,700 grant from the National HOSTS association. Teacher, Megan Lova, started the program at Jupiter Elementary by recruiting and training volunteers. The HOSTS volunteers are also gained through word of mouth and include parents, community members, retirees, and members of the city police force. The training is very prescribed. A mentor works with an individual student on materials and

activities to target emergent reading and writing skills prepared by the teacher. The HOSTS readiness program provides the one-to-one attention that makes a difference in the lives of LEP children.

The first year Jupiter Elementary began the program, it was offered in the morning, but now it is held all day, including after school. LEP students work in the resource room for an hour every morning, and half of that time is spent in the HOSTS program. The program has been so effective that students continued it after school. Even students who do not need aftercare stay after school because many of their parents cannot help their children with their English homework. Another positive aspect of the aftercare program is that it ensures that parents come to pick up their children at school, providing an opportunity to touch base with the teachers.

PARENT POWER 3

Parent Power 3 is a joint effort between the school district's Multicultural Education and Adult Education Departments. The program is funded by a grant from the district and is free to the participants. A certified teacher teaches English to the parents of students in the service area. If the parents have preschool children who need care, they leave the children in the adjacent room with a Child Development Assistant (CDA) who provides learning readiness activities to help prepare the preschool children for school.

The classes are held Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 11:30 a.m. Two different levels of English are taught. Last year two parents earned their GEDs. The goal this year is for the parents to stay after class to eat lunch with their elementary-aged children and to help the children succeed in school.

MATH SUPERSTARS

Math Superstars is a grant-funded program run by volunteers, not teachers. One parent at each grade level arranges a math problem of the week that normally has several steps. The students have one week to do the problem at home with their parents. Then the volunteer who posed the problem collects and corrects the papers. Students receive "star points" on an incentive ladder. Each week the class with the most students who have the correct answer gets frozen-flavored ice treats during their lunch period.

SATURDAY WRITES

Another program that was planned to help raise the Florida state test scores by involving families is called Saturday Writes and is held four times a year. This idea was developed from a teacher-brainstorming session. The parents meet in the school media center, and their children go to the cafeteria; teachers are in both places. The children are given a writing prompt while the parents learn how the

state writing test is scored. Then the children bring their writing samples into the media center, and their parents score their child's writing using a rubric. After this experience, parents have a much better understanding of how their children should be writing. The first year this program was offered, the writing score at Jupiter Elementary went from 49% passing to 70% passing. In the second year, of the Saturday Writes program, 100% of the students passed the state writing test.

Morikami Park Elementary School

6201 Morikami Park Road
Delray Beach, FL 33484
(561) 865-3960
Elizabeth A. Kennedy, *Principal*

Morikami Park Elementary School is four years old and is a magnet school. Its magnet program is an International Baccalaureate program with a philosophy that emphasizes international education. Morikami's mission is "educating today's children for tomorrow's world by working together with open minds to develop responsible and respectful citizens who are lifelong learners dedicated to productivity within a global society."

There are 962 students at Morikami: 544 (56%) are White, 182 (19%) are Black, 135 (14%) are Hispanic, and 101 (11%) are unclassified. There are 221 (23%) students who receive free or reduced lunch, 72 (7%) are considered to be ESE, and 3 (.3%) are considered gifted.

Morikami Park Elementary is surrounded by the Japanese Morikami museum, by polo fields, and by huge gated communities. Most of the students are not from the neighborhood as the empty bike rack shows. Even though the school is in an upper middle-class area, admission is based on a lottery system, and the school has a diverse student population. Fifteen buses bring about half the students from all over the county to the school, and the other half arrive by car. Most students travel 20 to 30 minutes from home, but the distance does not stop the parents from being involved.

Ms. Kennedy strongly believes that parents making the choice to send their students to her school is a big step towards their involvement. She believes that since the parents actually applied for their students to attend Morikami, they are interested in and informed about the school.

Morikami has a very active PTA that holds monthly activities or meetings. Over 500 parents attended a Friday spaghetti dinner. It was not a fundraiser, but a breakeven event.

Morikami also has a very large School Advisory Council. Ms. Kennedy indicated that for the 2000-2001 school year, there were 53 parents on the SAC. She was pleased that there were both fathers and mothers participating.

The school also has a program where businesses in the community adopt a class. Each class has been adopted, and the businesses donate money to the class. The school has an adopt-a-class coordinator who is a parent volunteer; this volunteer goes out and seeks business support.

The following are some unique ways Morikami Park Elementary promotes family and community involvement:

BEGINNING-OF-THE-YEAR ACTIVITIES

At the beginning of the school year, Morikami plans a number of events to get parents involved right from the start. The day before school begins, there is an open house in which the parents meet the teachers, eat in the cafeteria, and sign up to volunteer in the school.

Morikami also hosts a “boo-hoo” breakfast every year for the kindergarten parents. On the first day of school, after dropping off their children, parents come to the cafeteria for breakfast and to get information on how to be involved in the school.

Within the first couple weeks of the school year, the school also has curriculum nights. Similar to back-to-school nights, parents listen to teachers present what their children will learn throughout the year. This is also a good opportunity for the parents to ask the teachers questions.

VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Morikami has a Volunteers In Public Schools (VIPS) program and has created a structured volunteer system. There is a volunteer coordinator and grade-level volunteer chairs. Each grade-level chair distributes a form with a list of ways for parents to be involved. The teachers in each grade inform the grade-level chair what type of volunteer work they need, and the chair coordinates it. Because of the Florida location with a large population of senior citizens, Morikami also has many senior volunteers. This volunteer committee meets once a month. The members hold their monthly meetings in the volunteer center which is attached to the library. The room has a computer, a typewriter, and workspace for parents to work on projects that teachers request.

COMMUNICATION

Ms. Kennedy feels that the key to good parent involvement is communication. She makes telephone calls, returns telephone calls, and sends out newsletters. She also communicates with the families through a monthly newsletter. The PTA does its own monthly newsletters and the school also has a website with updated information.

Ms. Kennedy has requested that all teachers return telephone calls within 24 hours. She requires that the teachers keep a parent communication log and hold at least two conferences a year. In fact, parent teacher communication is such a priority that the SAC uses school improvement funds to pay for substitute teachers three days during the school year to free up teachers to meet with the parents.

Village Academy

400 Southwest 12th Avenue

Delray Beach, FL 33444

(561) 330-8899

Gale Fulford, *Principal*

Tobie Kasimer, *Parent Support Specialist*

Village Academy Elementary School opened in 2000 with approximately 200 students enrolled in grades K-2. In each successive year, one grade is being added until Village Academy enrolls students through the twelfth grade. As of the 2001-2002 school year, Village Academy enrolled 278 students in grades K to 3: 1 is White, 265 (95%) are Black, 5 (2%) are Hispanic, and 7 (3%) are unclassified. There are 265 (95%) students on free or reduced lunch, 45 (16%) are LEP, and 27 (10%) are considered ESE.

The concept for the school was conceived through a 1998-99 community planning process that was focused on breaking the cycle of poverty for residents of northwest and southwest Delray Beach. Residents emphatically targeted as a top priority the need to address critically low academic performance of neighborhood youth, a progressive condition chiefly attributed to the bussing of area youth to 15 different schools for desegregation purposes.

Having directed the community planning process, MAD DADS of Greater Delray Beach, Inc. (now doing business as Village Foundation) willingly assumed the responsibility of facilitating the establishment of a deregulated, public elementary school—from securing approval from the School Board of Palm Beach County to

raising significant private support. The City of Delray, United Way of Palm Beach County, The South Florida Annenberg Challenge, The Mary and Robert Pew Public Education Fund, and a generous private philanthropist all supported the founding and construction of the school within just 6 months.

Concurrent with the opening of Village Academy, Village Foundation established the Village Center. Together they provide a unique educational, health, and human service delivery system that is significantly improving the academic, social, moral, emotional, and spiritual lives of children, families and residents of Delray Beach. The following strategic components have guided the institution of the Village Academy/Center as a comprehensive educational system:

- At Village Academy, educators believe that “All children will learn and learn well...given some may need extra time.”
- 15:1 student to teacher ratio through grades 3, then 20:1 for all subsequent grades;
- Extended calendar that includes mandatory 10-hour school day, a 5.5-day school week, and a 264-day school year that includes 8 additional weeks in the summer;
- Highly competent administrative and instructional staff;
- State-of-the-art facility and technology and home-based technology use;
- Year round medical/nursing services for all students;
- Family Support Services, featuring physical/mental health and human services, and a broad range of educational, social, cultural, enrichment and volunteer program for Village Academy parents.

The following are unique family and community involvement programs to Village Academy:

THE KOBACKER FOUNDATION LAP TOP LENDING PROGRAM

An example of innovative, supplemental educational activities at Village Academy, The Kobacker Foundation Lap Top Lending Program was conceived by Tracy Kelly, the school’s reading specialist and the family support services personnel. To secure support for this program, Ms. Kelly submitted a grant to the Kobacker Foundation, through which Village Academy received 18 laptop computers and a packet of interactive books, with a CD and instructions. The computer actually reads the books out loud and provides related, interactive learning sessions for students and their families. Each grade level has an initial parent-student orientation with Creole and Spanish interpreters. Families are permitted to borrow the laptops for 2 nights each week per month. Most students check them out from Friday to Monday. This program has actively involved many parents who previously did not engage in any school-based activities.

SKILL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM FOR PARENTS

Through the Skill Enhancement program, parents can access numerous educational programs held Monday to Thursday, from 4:00 to 9:00 pm, on the Village Academy campus, free of charge. Classes include computer training, GED preparation, adult and family literacy, and ESOL. As with all Family Support Services programs, Skill Enhancement classes are advertised throughout the community by word of mouth, community newsletter, and flyers. Snacks and daycare are provided.

COLLABORATORS

Examples of unique partnerships with local businesses include: Suncoast Church, Office Depot, and numerous other businesses donated backpacks and school supplies as part of the annual “Back-to-School Bash.” MBNA pays its employees to volunteer 1 hour a week at Village Academy. WXEL radio personnel visit monthly as part of the Village Academy Book Club which donates books to students and helps teach parents to read to their children. Palm Beach Community College gives its college students credit in the CDA degree for working with the children in aftercare. Muzak Heart and Soul Foundation sends 15-20 musically inclined students to Piano Camp each summer at Florida Atlantic University.

THE ROOTS CULTURAL FESTIVAL, INC.

As part of the Village Academy Beacon Center Program, funded by Children’s Service Council of Palm Beach County, the Roots Cultural Festival provides programs at Village Academy that celebrate unity and culture. The program is based on the belief that students who experience the arts are more likely to acquire skills and aptitudes to help them succeed in school and in life. Students have the opportunity to take classes twice each week in band, drama, vocal music, creative writing, piano and keyboard, strings, steel drums, and creative dance. Parents are encouraged to take classes with their children. Artists-in-residence serve as instructors. Each May, students showcase their new abilities in a “Kuumba” program.

MAD DADS OF GREATER DELRAY BEACH

MAD DADS of Greater Delray Beach was launched in 1992 by uniting concerned citizens in an unprecedented effort to combat a myriad of problems that plague their neighborhood. During the ensuing ten years, MAD DADS became the main pillar of support for families and residents in west Delray Beach through the establishment and ongoing expansion of three main programs: (1) Community Building; (2) Youth Development; and (3) Family Strengthening.

As described above, MAD DADS worked tirelessly to facilitate the establishment of the Village Academy. Now called “Village Foundation,” a name chosen to reflect exponential growth and expanded fundraising capacity, the agency is currently facilitating renewed community planning efforts. These efforts will map new

directives aimed at fulfilling Village Foundation’s mission to break the cycle of poverty by being a national model of excellence in the areas of education, community building, and family enrichment.

Wynnebrook Elementary School

1167 Drexel Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33417
(561) 640-5086
Jeffrey Pegg, *Principal*
Leslie Millar, *Parent Liaison*

Wynnebrook Elementary has 1,020 students: 351 (34%) are White, 435 (43%) are Black, 180 (18%) are Hispanic, and 54 (5%) are not classified. There are 782 (77%) students on free or reduced lunch, 175 (17%) are LEP, and 149 (15%) are ESE students.

Wynnebrook Elementary is a Title I school and, therefore, is required to have a parent liaison. Mr. Pegg recommended that the researcher interview Mrs. Millar, Wynnebrook’s Parent Liaison. Most of the schools have teacher assistants as liaisons, but Mrs. Millar is a certified teacher. She is solely in charge of all the family, community, and business involvement at the school. Wynnebrook went from minimal family involvement 6 years ago, before Mrs. Millar started her job, to 250 families attending the school open house for the 2000-2001 school year.

Mrs. Millar teaches adult classes for the parents throughout the year. For the 2001-2002 year, she had 12 first-grade families in a program where the parent and the child come to school and attend a literacy course, called ‘Parents, Children, and Literacy.’ Mrs. Millar has also created a homework box program in which children who do not have study materials at home are given a box filled with a dictionary, thesaurus, calculator, and other supplies so they have the tools necessary to do school work at home.

Wynnebrook has a Back-to-Basics Angel program where a local philanthropist gets holiday donations of basic clothing needs (socks, underwear, and sneakers) for 600 of Wynnebrook’s neediest families. Lenscrafters also helped with basic needs during the 2001 academic year by providing 35 students with free eye exams and glasses.

A law firm in Palm Beach is another business donor. When the teachers needed classroom computers, the law firm bought them computers. When a student with Cystic Fibrosis needed \$1,000 clean-air filter, the law firm assumed the cost.

Likewise, another generous donor is Josh Marcus who started his own nonprofit business called Sack It To You. Josh filled 50 backpacks with school supplies for children in the school whose families could not afford them.

Mrs. Millar suggests that schools trying to get parents involved should get involved themselves. She personally joined Kiwanis for networking purposes. The Kiwanis dues are paid for by the parent liaison fund. She also started a Kiwanis Kids Club, called K-Kids, which is the elementary version of a Kiwanis Club. Her adult Kiwanis chapter contributes a significant amount of money and services to Wynnebrook.

Mrs. Millar's involvement efforts have been successful. Her school won the state Nonprofit Business Partnership award for its work with the Kiwanis. Wynnebrook also won the Senior Volunteer category at the state level and the Humana Good Neighbor award at the county level. In 2001 the school received its first Five Star School Award.

The following are some programs that Mrs. Millar feels helped her school earn the Five Star School Award:

PARENT RESOURCE CENTER

Wynnebrook uses a mobile classroom as its parent resource center. Parents are welcomed by the paintings on the outside and decorative flags on the inside. The Parent Resource Center is filled with a variety of supplies for students which are provided by business partners like Target. The center has educational games for all ages, abilities, and subject areas. The center also provides non-reusable items, such as shoes and jackets, for children. Unfortunately, the Title I grant that Mrs. Millar had in previous years to obtain educational materials, was not being offered in the 2001-2002 school year, thus supplies could not be replenished.

FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

Wynnebrook has a Foster Grandparent Program paid for by the Area Agency on Aging. Foster grandparents volunteer at the school for 20 hours a week and work with one teacher and her students. For the 2001-2002, Wynnebrook had nine foster grandparents. Century Village, a senior citizens' housing complex located across from the school, is also a good resource to recruit more volunteers.

BANKING

Wynnebrook has a unique banking program with Washington Mutual Bank. Every Friday students deposit a quarter in their student bank account. This program offers the children a chance to learn how to save and manage their money. The

bank gives the students a quarterly statement. Some students continue this program from kindergarten to sixth grade and reap the reward of accrued interest over the years.

JOB SHADOWING, CAMERAS, AND CAREER PROGRAMS

Mrs. Millar said she had a dream, a vision, and wrote a grant titled “Job Shadowing, Cameras, and Career Programs.” In this program, a group of fifth-grade students shadowed Target employees and worked at a Target store four hours a week for five weeks. The students used disposable cameras to capture the employees duties that involved needing special training (i.e., stocking, recording and working at the cash register). At the end of the program, the students created a portfolio which highlighted what they had learned. This Target received the rank of number one retail business in Florida by Governor Jeb Bush who came to honor the Target employees and fifth graders at the Ritz Carlton for the joint program.

SECTION 2

Broward County Elementary Schools

by: Genie Osorio

Coral Springs Elementary

3601 N.W. 110th Avenue

Coral Springs, FL 33065

(954) 344-5800

Jennifer Freeland, *Principal*

Denise Loglia, *PTA President*

Coral Springs Elementary is a K-6 school with an enrollment of 915 students. It is considered one of the older schools in the city of Coral Springs. Coral Springs Elementary's student enrollment continues to grow each year. It is a diverse school with representation from various ethnic groups: 403 (44%) are White, 220 (24%) are Black; 210 (23%) are Hispanic, and 82 (9%) are unclassified. The remaining student population is made up of Asians, Indians, and those classified as Multi-racial. Coral Springs Elementary serves the needs of approximately 100 LEP students, mostly of Hispanic and Haitian descent.

The parent involvement program was discussed with the PTA president, Denise Loglia, who was very open in sharing information about the school's activities. All parent involvement activities are strongly supported by the principal, Ms. Freeland, who engrosses herself in the parent activities with much excitement. The success of the program is mainly attributable to the principal, as she stresses to her faculty and staff the importance of always being there for the parents and personally participating in all school-parent events, regardless of time or day of the week.

The administrators and the staff consider it important to know the needs of the community and the parent population. The PTA follows through on this idea by providing orientation services at the beginning of the year for parents who wish to

be volunteers. The PTA holds training sessions, both in the morning and in the evening, to accommodate the families various work schedules. The popularity and the success of an event are measured by the attendance of the parents and the students.

Some of the parent involvement programs at Coral Springs Elementary include:

SAFETY RODEO

The Safety Rodeo is a special weekend event that made its debut this year. Although several related themes are introduced to the students, the main focus is safety. In partnership with the local police department, the PTA invites all students to bring their bicycles to the school site. Issues regarding bike helmet use and wear, and traffic regulations for bicycles and riders are addressed. Students also have the opportunity to register their bicycles with the police to maintain a record of ownership and for a speedier recovery if their bicycles are ever lost or stolen. In addition, the police officers highlight the dangers associated with use of weapons.

ICE CREAM/MAGICIAN NIGHT SOCIAL

One event, which draws over 100 parents and students each year, is the Ice Cream/Magician Night Social which has become extremely popular. It is very popular with both students and parents. The hired magician performs all his tricks, at the same time stressing the importance of doing well academically and staying in school. This activity is an icebreaker event that sets the tone for future school and parent activities. There is much planning that goes into this event, and it usually starts off the school year on a good note.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PTA

In organizing information about its parents, the PTA creates a database of parent and volunteer names and addresses. These are then separated by the area of interest the parents designate when filling out the school volunteer form at the beginning of the year. The PTA also coordinates the school's yearly activities scrapbook, a huge 10-inch-thick elegantly decorated binder, which includes descriptions and samples of the major events that took place during the year. The Broward County Council PTA acknowledges all entries and awards prizes for the best book. The PTA also publishes a quarterly newsletter called the *Bear Facts*. Students collaborate in this effort by interviewing special personalities (teachers, administrators, and students) and by inviting commentary from the school community.

The PTA coordinates all the parent-involvement activities within the school. General PTA meetings are held five times a year. These meetings are linked to other parent events, including volunteer orientation. Attendance at these formal meetings is difficult for many parents because of their work schedules. However, these busy parents find time to show school support other ways as evidenced by the 7,500 hours of volunteer service recorded.

Country Hills Elementary

10550 Westview Dr.

Coral Springs, FL 33326

Donna Morrison, *Principal*

Susan Lombard, *Assistant Principal*

Debbie Scandling, *PTA Co-President*

Country Hills Elementary is a K-3 school in the northwestern part of Broward County with an enrollment of 1265 students. This high student enrollment represents the development that the area has experienced in the last few years. The student enrollment of 908 reflects the following: (72%) are White, 122 (10%) are Black, 146 (12%) are Hispanic, and 89 (6%) students represent Asians and those classified as Multi-racial. Approximately 68 students (5%) are considered LEP.

Staff and faculty place a high value on the parent-involvement activities as is evidenced by their participation in evening school activities. The school can anticipate its parent participation for the academic year by the attendance shown at the Open Houses. The school hosts the Open Houses on three different evenings to accommodate K to 3 parents. All parent-involvement initiatives have worked out well, according to the administration and the teachers.

Some of the programs at Country Hills Elementary include:

MATH AND SCIENCE NIGHT

Math and science nights are very popular events drawing a large number of parents and students. Rooms are set up with various themes and parents come and read to their children. Parents and students work on experiments together and travel from one experimental station to the next. Many of the popular experiments done in the labs throughout the year are on display during the evening. The media specialist confers with teachers to make sure that many of the books relating to math and science are on display for referral and reading. The PTA sponsors an author visit each year.

SPANISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM

The Spanish Language Program is a popular and interesting parent involvement activity developed by one of the parents. Spanish-speaking parents who express an interest in this activity are asked to teach Spanish lessons to the students. The curriculum builds on previously acquired Spanish language skills and is taught once a week during the school day. This activity is especially noteworthy in its success of involving parents who may not usually participate in school activities due to language

barriers. In fact, the Spanish Language Program was awarded The Little Red School House Award for the 2001-2002 school year. This is a recognition awarded by the Department of Florida Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals.

PARENT TRAINING PROGRAM

Parent-training workshops cover several areas and are planned by administration, faculty and the PTA. Topics of workshops include assertive discipline, reading strategies, and test-taking skills. In the assertive discipline workshop, speakers are invited to give presentations on parenting skills for those parents who are experiencing difficulty with the discipline of their children. This popular workshop has a high parent turnout. Both the reading and the test-taking skill workshops are intensive. Parents receive information and handouts on the skills that students need to master in order to be successful on the FCAT. This includes reading strategies, critical thinking skills, and sample test questions. Test-taking techniques for students are also addressed. Parents expressed their interest in having this type of parent training continue, as was indicated on a parent survey.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Parents are not only involved in activities related to the school, but are also very involved in their entire community. Their volunteer hours exceeded 10,000 last year. Strong support from the administration is evident, as is the reciprocal relationship between the PTA and the staff. The administration and the staff has worked hard on nurturing productive partnerships with Wal-Mart, Tony Romas, Borders, Wendy's, Brookside Publix and Bank United. Open communication channels between the school and the business communities are maintained.

Deerfield Beach Elementary

650 N.E. 1st Street

Deerfield Beach, FL 33441

(954) 481-5757

John Hodge, *Principal*

Bill Ruswick, *Music Teacher*

Once known as the Deerfield School, Deerfield Beach Elementary looks very similar to when it opened in 1927. Built in 1926, its name was changed to Deerfield Beach Elementary in 1939. Upon entering, one immediately sees a plaque in the

entrance from the City of Deerfield Beach, which designates the school as a historical site. In many of the older classrooms, windows extend the full height of the walls from the floor to the ceiling. Notable is the auditorium, an original theater with wooden seats that accommodates 277 persons. In its early days, when it became necessary to serve lunches to children, the Deerfield School converted the teachers' lounge into a kitchen. The lounge was later restored to its original function after a cafeteria was built.

Now Deerfield Beach Elementary is a neighborhood school attended by different generations of families who have remained in the area. Recently renovated and expanded with the addition of a new wing, the school's architecture and soft pink hue allow it to blend in among all the other structures in the area. Deerfield Elementary School has 882 students: 443 (51%) are White, 235 (27%) are Black, 174 (19%) are Hispanic, 12 (1%) are multiracial, and 18 (2%) are Asian.

Bill Ruswick, an inspiring music teacher who is the leader behind the parent-involvement program at the school. Some of the programs that make Deerfield Beach Elementary stand out include:

THE PARENT RESOURCE CENTER

The school's atmosphere is a very positive one. The clerical and support staff immediately greet and direct one to the appropriate department or office. Not far from the reception area is The Parent Resource Center, a specially designated room for family and community members. This room serves several purposes. For one, it is the site of parent conferences, and meetings. In addition, the room contains literature and information in the form of books, pamphlets, and brochures for parents, who can relax and sit in one of the large lounge chairs and learn about assertive discipline, parent training, homework tips, and/or reading strategies. The staff makes donations, so that books and materials can be ordered from publishers to keep an adequate supply of resources. Some of the material can be found in different languages, including Spanish and Portuguese. Parents also volunteer and help out in the center.

MULTI-EVENT SCHOOL CALENDAR

The PTA and the teachers have joined forces in an endeavor which is unique to Deerfield Beach Elementary. Several local agencies were contacted, including the City of Deerfield Beach and the Parks and Recreation Department, to publish a school calendar. This comprehensive calendar lists all the events that take place in the academic year including city, park, and school events. Calendars are sent home to the parents to enable them to highlight the events they wish to attend. The staff also highlight these events during the year, and the students are frequently reminded of upcoming attractions.

COUNCIL FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT (CPI)

The council has meetings throughout the year. Some of the events that it sponsors include an art and award recognition, curriculum informational meetings, and educational speakers, including Dr. Harry K. Wong. The CPI is also involved in making available to parents and students the *Victory Lane* newsletter which is published twice a month. The council also provides translators or interpreters for special situations. This helps the parents understand educational information about their student and enables them to communicate through an interpreter.

Indian Trace Elementary

400 Indian Trace Blvd.

Weston, FL 33326

(954) 384-5100

Wanda Ross, *Principal*

Andrea Hodgen, *PTA/SAC President*

Indian Trace Elementary is a Five Star school located in the heart of Weston, Florida. The school, although built over 10 years ago, appears new and well maintained. The setting and the atmosphere of the school are pleasant. From the start, Indian Trace Elementary gives an impression of a highly organized school. This researcher met with a committee of stakeholders to discuss different aspects of the parent involvement program. The committee appeared very eager to discuss their school, their projects and their goals with students and parents, and all the programs that have had an impact on their community.

As one of the larger elementary schools in the district, it has a student population of 1,215: 680 (56%) are White, 49 (4%) are Black, 413 (34%) are Hispanic, 24 (2%) are Asian, and 49 (4%) are Multi-racial. Approximately 20% of the student population are classified as LEP. These student percentages are representative of the feeder middle schools and high schools in Weston. As a result of this diversity in its student population, the school's programs reflect awareness and sensitivity to the needs of its international parents.

Some of the programs which make Indian Trace Elementary unique include:

MEET THE MASTERS

Indian Trace Elementary keeps its community busy. One popular program is Meet the Masters, a monthly activity sponsored by the State of Florida, where parents

become the teachers for the lesson. They discuss the biographies and the works of famous artists exposing students to art and culture. Hands-on experiences are also encouraged. The counselor at Indian Trace Elementary expresses her enthusiasm for the program and has firsthand experience in teaching the program herself. Parents rely on specifically designed guides for their lessons. Through this program, parents have a special opportunity to interact with the student body as well as the faculty and the staff.

WHERE IT'S AT

Indian Trace Elementary is very proud of the Where IT's At program, for parents who are new to the community. The I and the T in Where IT's At are the initials of Indian Trace. This program focuses on the special attention that new families to the community should receive. On the first day of registration, parents are given the opportunity to discuss, in their own language, concerns and issues relevant to the school and community. If the resources are not available the initial day of registration, then appointments are set up with a point person to have the parents' questions and concerns answered. Parents are given a tour of the school facilities and meet with their child's teacher for the first time. This program was entered into the Best Programs of Volunteers Services, a state-sponsored program, which recognizes schools for outstanding parent and volunteer activities.

GIVING PROGRAMS

The administrators and the staff have adopted a daycare center where they provide presents for needy families during the holiday season. The entire school community is involved. Parents and the school network with the daycare center during the year to allocate gifts and donations. A group of students and parents then present the daycare center with the collection of gifts at the holidays.

The school also sponsors a special program for families of children who are on free and reduced lunch. Wear IT Again, is an innovative program which provides families with school uniforms that have been donated by other families. The uniforms are then sold to the needy families for \$1 or \$2, which essentially covers the cost of a dry- cleaning fee. Families find this very helpful, especially since school uniforms may be \$25 to \$30 each.

THE PTA DATABASE

The PTA strongly relies on a database of parent and volunteer names and addresses. This database is developed into a directory for the members of the PTA. In the first week of the school year, packets of information regarding volunteer activities and the PTA are sent to the parents. Approximately 250 forms were returned this year. Not every volunteer is assigned to a task or an activity, as the willingness to participate is greater than the demand.

The PTA holds orientation meetings for new parents and volunteers. Many of the volunteers do not work or work part-time and consider it a priority to be involved in their children's education. Over 7,800 volunteer hours have been logged and it is expected that by the end of the 2002 school year, the school will log close to 9,000 hours as in previous years.

The administrators and staff at Indian Trace feel that a very important component of its parent involvement program is to keep the parents motivated, informed, and involved. Part of this is achieved by holding monthly PTA meetings, usually attended by 30 to 35 parents. The PTA also publishes a quarterly newsletter, which covers major and upcoming events. Additionally, one of the parents developed a school website two years ago. The website describes many of the parent involvement programs, including PTA activities. Much of the information about the school and the PTA can be accessed from the site.

Parkside Elementary

10257 N.W. 29th Street

Coral Springs, FL 33065

(954) 796-4530

Sue Colton, *Principal*

Joyce Aguila, *Assistant Principal*

Michelle St. Germain, *PTA President*

Parkside Elementary is a new K to 6 school with an enrollment of 1,140 students. This enrollment includes an LEP student population of 110 students. Approximately 661 (58%) are White, 228 (20%) are Hispanic, 160 (14%) are Black, and 91 (8%) are Asian and Multiracial. The PTA President, Ms. Germain, shared valuable information relevant to the parent involvement program at Parkside Elementary. As a new school of two years, Parkside Elementary's programs are in the developmental stages. Yet, there is very active involvement from the family and community as the PTA and the SAC committees work collaboratively to organize many of the events.

Some of Parkside Elementary special programs include:

PARENT AND STUDENT INSTRUCTIONAL SESSIONS

Parent and student instructional sessions are held four times a year and focus on the school's mission and objectives for the upcoming year. This academic year, Parkside Elementary hosted four instructional evenings, which included two reading, one social studies, and one math event. Students and parents move about

a large room, usually the media center, and hands-on projects and activities are on display so that students and parents can manipulate the information. This is a popular event for parents, students, and teachers because of the valuable parental skills they gain.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR STUDENT RECOGNITION

The school holds several partnerships with area organizations, including Carrabbas Restaurant and Washington Mutual Bank. Carrabbas donated over 1,200 free kid's meal certificates. These certificates, signed by the principal and teacher, were used to start a Student of the Week Program. This is in addition to the current Student of the Month Program which the school also promotes. These programs were started to allow more student recognition for hard work and achievement.

Parkside Elementary also has a partnership with Washington Mutual. (This program is similar to Wynnebrook Elementary's Banking as discussed on page 16.) Students learn about mathematics and its many functions. They have an opportunity to open up their own savings accounts in the school. The media center becomes a temporary bank, and personnel from Washington Mutual assist in the process. All the accounting information is put on a computer disk and processed at the bank.

ART AND MUSIC EXPO

Parkside Elementary holds an Annual Art and Music Expo. Art work created by the students is displayed around the school. The chorus as well as the school's Strings Club performs while the parents have an opportunity to view the variety of art work created by their children.

SECTION 3

Broward County Middle Schools

by: Karen B. Greenberg

BACKGROUND ON MIDDLE SCHOOLS

The research regarding middle schools yields noticeable differences from the family and community-involvement programs prevalent in elementary schools. This difference can best be explained by the scheduling structure and the age of the children. Elementary schools often contain single classrooms consisting of a group of students who remain in the same classroom and with the same instructor for most of their day. Conversely, most middle schools schedule their students into six different classes with a different teacher for each subject. Some middle schools opt for block scheduling which reduces the number of classes attended by students on a daily basis. The basic concept, however, is the same in that the students see different teachers for different subjects and do not stay in one classroom all day.

The differences between scheduling of elementary and middle schools greatly influences the cultures of the respective school. If one uses the analogy of a city to describe the culture of a school, then one can say that the sense of community is greater in an elementary school by virtue of the fact that the same students share the same space with the same teacher for an entire day. Thus, they become a community or a unit in and of themselves. In middle school, however, the feel of a small town or a community is substituted by that of small families. In seeking their own niche, students tend to separate into small groups irrespective of their classrooms, and sometimes these groups function as small families that can be either conducive or destructive to a sense of community depending on the school's culture.

Another mitigating factor of family and community involvement in middle schools is the age of the students. Unlike middle schoolers, elementary-aged students usually welcome (and sometimes demand) the involvement of their families.

These differences between elementary and middle schools are evident in the style

and the type of family and community involvement models found in schools. What follows is an exploration of three middle schools whose family and community involvement have earned them the Five Star School Award. While reading about them, note the differences between their programs and those of the aforementioned elementary schools.

Falcon Cove Middle School

4251 Bonaventure Boulevard

Weston, FL 33332

(954) 385-7400

Steve Friedman, *Principal*

Jeanne Dempsey, *Resource Teacher*

Falcon Cove Middle School is in its second year of operation. In that short time, it has been recognized for outstanding family and community involvement. Despite the school's enormity, the principal, Steve Friedman, has done an excellent job in making the community feel welcome and in creating a culture of shared purpose and involvement in student education.

The school has 2,111 students: 1,245 (59%) are White, 106 (5%) are Black, 612 (29%) are Hispanic, and 148 (7%) are unclassified. Only 6% of the students receive free or reduced meals. There are 324 students classified as LEP; 153 as ESE; and 233 as gifted.

Mr. Friedman assigns the tasks of family and community involvement to the school's resource teacher. This teacher is on task assignment and deals with curriculum, public relations, school activities, and other such assignments as designated by the principal. Thus, it was Jeanne Dempsey with whom this researcher met with to obtain information regarding the school's family and community involvement activities and programs.

Ms. Dempsey provided interesting background involving the inception of Falcon Cove's parent involvement. When the school held an open house prior to the first day of the 2000-2001 school year (the first year of Falcon Cove's operation), community volunteer booths and tables were set up where the parents and students retrieve student schedules. In other words, these tables were strategically placed in high-traffic areas. On that one day, over 700 parents signed up to volunteer during the school year, seven of whom signed up to be the volunteer coordinator. This is a time-consuming and labor-intensive job because volunteer coordinators orchestrate the recruitment, the maintenance, and the allocation of labor for

volunteers and serve as the primary liaison between the school and the community and families. Therefore, this overwhelming response was indicative of the climate in which the school is situated.

Families in this community want to be involved in their children's school. Knowing this, Falcon Cove realizes that it has a rich resource from which to draw. Falcon Cove does draw on this resource. Its PTO boasts 1,064 members. Its SAC comprises 30 members and runs in conjunction with its School Advisory Forum (SAF), and its business partners total eight. All Broward County schools are required to have a PTO, SAC and SAF; consequently, the existence of these organizations is not noteworthy in and of itself. What is noteworthy is how these organizations function (or malfunction) within schools.

The following are three family and community involvement programs that are unique to Falcon Cove Middle School.

HEALTH EXPO

On a Saturday in January, Falcon Cove, in partnership with its neighborhood Publix Supermarket, sponsored a health fair. The booths included a myriad of fitness and medical experts, such as a dermatologist, an orthodontist, an optometrist, a dentist, a chiropractor, a martial arts instructor, a makeup artist, a hair stylist, and many more such professionals dealing in or with teenage issues and interests. The response to this program was overwhelming. Over one thousand parents and students were in attendance and 22 vendors were present. This program was so successful that plans are already in the works for next year's expo.

FAMILY READING NIGHT

In February, Falcon Cove partnered with the *Sun-Sentinel* newspaper and held an annual Family Reading Night. The theme of this program was "Read for Life," which included hands-on activities, strategies that cross all subject areas and can be implemented by parents with their children, along with an introduction to online databases and research sites pertaining to reading and improving reading skills.

The *Sun-Sentinel* sponsored this program and provided a complimentary dinner supplied by John the Baker, a neighborhood caterer from Pembroke Pines. In its advertisement, Falcon Cove states, "We will have activities for the younger siblings, as well as the adults in the family. Everyone is welcome!" Due to space limitations for this program, Falcon Cove limited attendance to the first 450 families that replied to the RSVP, and because 450 represents families, actual attendance was nearly triple this number.

PAY IT FORWARD

The idea for the program Pay It Forward came from the movie of the same name. The way this program operates is that each student gets an unlimited number of Pay It Forward cards. Any time a student does a good deed or a favor for someone at home or in the community she leaves the recipient of the favor one of the Pay It Forward cards. The recipient is then instructed by the student to do three additional favors for three other people, whether they be family or community members or neighborhood business people. This program was designed for no other reason than to spread goodwill. The peripheral benefit of it, however, is that now Falcon Cove and some of its school programs are advertised to the community via word of mouth!

Indian Ridge Middle School

1355 Nob Hill Road

Davie, FL 33324

(954) 916-0141

Doug Iscovitz, *Principal*

Cathy Sullivan, *Assistant Principal*

Indian Ridge is run by principal Doug Iscovitz, who establishes a warm, friendly school culture by maintaining an open-door policy for anyone (student, parent, community, or staff member) who wishes to see him for any reason. Mr. Iscovitz believes that anytime a parent or community member has a suggestion, it is important to listen to that suggestion openly so as to be able to recognize any potential it could have. He further believes that if the suggestion is not viable, it is necessary to let the parent or the community member know why. This serves to validate the person who brought in the idea and paves the road for future visits, thereby encouraging continued interest in the school.

According to its School Public Accountability Report for the 2001-2002 school year, Indian Ridge's October enrollment count was 2,177. Of those students, 1,741 (79%) are White, 65 (3%) are Black, 305 (14%) are Hispanic, 44 (3%) are Asian, and less than 22 (1%) are unclassified. Only 8% of the students received free or reduced meals. There are 74 students classified as LEP, 201 as ESE; and 141 as gifted.

Mr. Iscovitz boasts "hardly any discipline problems" and proudly points out his uniform-wearing student body. His enthusiasm over the unified dress code stems from having involved the community, the parents, and the students in the decision-making. In fact, Mr. Iscovitz said that the logo which mandatorily appears on every student's shirt was designed by a student and was voted upon by the student body.

This involvement, he pointed out, is the very reason why getting the policy passed and getting adherence to the policy is so successful. This serves as yet another testimony to the importance of parent and community involvement to school success.

Cathy Sullivan who serves as the contact person for most, though not all, parent and community involvement activities. It was clear that Ms. Sullivan also subscribes to the open-door policy as she gladly agreed to speak with the researcher. She proudly shared the pictures and the flyers of events comprising Indian Ridge's Five Star School Award portfolio.

Indian Ridge's PTA has an impressive membership of 1,200, and its SAC is comprised of 30 members. Membership for these groups is solicited the moment a person steps into the school. On a table in the front office are volunteer forms, PTA committee sign-up sheets, activity calendars, and other such materials that speak loudly to Indian Ridge's encouragement of parent and community support.

Below is a description of some of the impressive programs taking place at Indian Ridge:

JAGUAR JOG

This fundraising activity named after the school mascot is held in the fall. With 1,200 PTA members, this event is both well supported and sponsored. At the beginning of the year, \$41,000 was raised from this event. Due to the tragedy that befell America on September 11, a second Jaguar Jog was held and all of the \$25,000 earned was donated to the American Red Cross.

GRANDPARENTS' DAY

Grandparents' Day was the third such annual invitation extended by Indian Ridge to its families. Since many families living in South Florida come from many parts of the world, this program is held the week of Thanksgiving so that visiting relatives can attend. Students bring their grandparents to school in the morning. They have breakfast together and then attend morning classes. This program is a popular one with the students, as they are extremely excited about showing their grandparents around their school. This past year over 300 grandparents took advantage of this opportunity to spend meaningful time with their grandchildren.

SPRING FOR SUCCESS

Every Broward County school holds an annual open house, but Indian Ridge does something in the spring that takes the open house concept to a new level. Spring for Success invites parents to attend school in the evening and actually sit through three of their students' classes. During class time, the teacher does more than give an overview of the course curriculum and the grading system; the teacher actually teaches a lesson. Science teachers have parents complete a lab, while the home

economics teacher cooks with the parents. Indian Ridge is changing its Spring for Success program this year. Previously, this event was open only to parents. This year Indian Ridge has decided to have the students come along with their parents to make it a more family-friendly experience.

Parkway Middle School for the Performing Arts

3500 NW 5th Court

Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

(954) 797-4550

Vernon Beard, *Principal*

Donna Boruch, *Resource Teacher*

Vernon Beard, principal of Parkway Middle School for the Performing Arts, speaks of his school with great pride. Not only is he currently the principal of the school, but he also used to be the school's assistant principal. At the time Mr. Beard became assistant principal of Parkway, he personally canvassed the neighborhood to solicit community involvement, visiting neighboring businesses, big and small, to tell businessmen and businesswomen about Parkway Middle School and how its students needed their support. He stressed that this support need not be monetary, but, rather, he wished it to be in the form of time and interaction with the students. He invited business people to attend the monthly performances in order for them to see, firsthand, the students' achievements and to share in celebrating the myriad talents of the student body. Mr. Beard's persistence paid off; by the end of the year, he had gained 21 active business partnerships for Parkway Middle School, ranging from the big business of Popeye's Chicken to the small operation of the corner barbershop.

Mr. Beard admitted that his responsibilities as principal are now far more extensive and require delegating some of the community involvement programming of his school. He requested that the school resource teacher, Mrs. Boruch meet with the researcher. Mrs. Boruch's office is located in a different part of the campus. There, she proudly handed over the Five Star School portfolio, the contents of which were overflowing. In her description of the programs and the phenomenal turnout of the teachers to these events, despite their not receiving compensation, it became evident that Mr. Beard's values regarding family and community involvement had been instilled into his faculty and into the community with which he works.

Parkway is a magnet school attracting students from around the county who are interested in the performing arts. According to its School Public Accountability

Report for the 2001-2002 school year, Parkways October enrollment count was 2,201. Of those students, 1,651 (75%) are Black, 396 (18%) are White, 132 (6%) are Hispanic, and 22 (1%) are unclassified. Fifty-five percent of students received free or reduced meals. There were 28 students classified as LEP; 146 as ESE; and 74 as gifted.

In addition to the monthly student performances for which Parkway Middle is known, many family and community activities are peppered throughout the school year.

The following is an exploration of some of the successful and interesting programs implemented by Parkway Middle, all of which contribute to the exemplary family and community involvement practices at this school:

FAMILY FCAT NIGHT

According to the flier sent home to parents, the purpose of the Family FCAT Night is “to give parents the latest information about the FCAT and to provide strategies and materials that can be used at home to help students increase their test scores.” This 2-hour event runs 30-minute concurrent sessions on the following topics: FCAT Strategies, FCAT Writing Skills, FCAT Simulator Software Program, FCAT Practice, and Reading and Math Skills. In addition to the concurrently run sessions, Family FCAT Night also advertises these “special attractions”: Textbook Give-Away, Free Educational Materials, Title I Resource Van, and Buck-A-Book Sale. Clearly, this evening is parent-friendly and student-achievement oriented.

STUDENT PERFORMANCES

Since Parkway Middle is a magnet school of the performing arts, the students put on performances monthly. These performances are well attended and used by the staff as opportune times to herald upcoming events to a captive audience. Additionally, neighborhood business owners are encouraged to attend these performances in order to show support for the school. By inviting local business representatives to these events, Parkway Middle School demonstrates reciprocity to the community for their other forms of support, while simultaneously paving the way for future opportunities to establish partnerships with the community.

TITLE I WORKSHOPS

Once a quarter, parents can attend various workshops funded by Title I, including “The Home-School Liaison: A Winning Connection” and “Motivating Your Children for High Performance.” These workshops culminate in a workshop of grand proportions held annually. As usual, parents are provided with textbooks, refreshments, and other enticements to increase attendance.

Also, twice a year family festivals are held. The theme of the spring festival held last March was “Literacy and the Arts.” The last such festival drew over 300 families and was deemed a raving success.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What are commonalities among all 13 schools?
2. What are the differences between the schools with a parent liaison and those with a principal in charge of family and community involvement?
3. What are the differences between Palm Beach and Broward county schools?
4. Why is the role of the principal important?
5. What can you take from these case studies to use at your own school?
6. What programs would not work at your school and why?
7. What other interview questions should have been asked?

FINDINGS

The researchers found many similarities among the schools. The most obvious similarity was the principal's role. At each school the principal created a positive climate for encouraging family involvement in the schools. Families felt welcomed by the office staff and had a designated place to go in the school where they could do volunteer work. Families also had a designated person they could talk to about being involved. Interestingly, when there was a teacher designated as parent liaison, there were more programs, but that teacher was very overwhelmed. When the principal coordinated the programs through delegation, there were less programs than when there was a specific staff member in charge.

All the schools proved to have exemplary family and community involvement and business partnerships. Each school planned nontraditional programs to involve the parents and had parents visible in the school. All the schools planned programs based on the needs of their community. The schools used creative methods for generating new ideas, and for getting the family and the community involved. All the schools agreed that a program was successful if parents showed up and learned something new. Only one school used informal evaluations.

All of the schools found ways to fund their programs through district, state, or federal money or grants so that the full cost was not incurred by families themselves. The schools also focused many of their programs on core curriculum related topics and provided opportunities for parents to learn how to improve their children's academic performance. The most important thing to keep in mind when developing family and community involvement activities is that not all activities are successful in all schools; it is imperative to tailor the programs to the specific needs of the school.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the exploration of programs and school cultures presented, the differences between elementary and middle school family and community involvement programs should be evident. In middle schools, faculty and staff really need to go out to bring in the community, whereas, in elementary schools, the key to successful involvement is nourishing the participation that often knocks on the schools' doors.

Each of the middle school principals, the assistant principals, and the resource teachers who were interviewed readily admit to "tricks" they use to increase attendance. Some of these strategies include providing refreshments, inviting students to the parent events, making available free textbooks or materials, and showcasing student work and achievements.

It is evident that being a Five Star school and achieving exemplary family and community involvement in schools is a task primarily necessitating commitment to the cause. The teachers, the leadership, and the students must value the human resources available outside the school walls and must establish a culture that, cultivates commitment and welcomes involvement.

It is the researchers hope that the information provided in this monograph will motivate leaders to follow the example of the aforementioned schools and will provide those leaders with a springboard of ideas from which to leap into this endeavor.

For the reasons mentioned in the introduction of this study, schools need to do a better job of improving family and community involvement. Creating a culture that welcomes such involvement, and cultivating that involvement once a school has captured it, are two important ingredients toward increasing families' and communities' interests in school.

OVERALL REFLECTIONS

The aforementioned programs implemented in the schools discussed in this study, utilize certain “tricks” or sure-fire ways of improving family and community involvement in schools. The following list incapsulates some of those strategies.

- Create a warm, friendly atmosphere beginning with the phone staff and the receptionists.
- Encourage students to encourage family involvement by making them active participants in the activities and events that are scheduled.
- Provide babysitting services for younger siblings whose parents may wish to attend a function, but are deterred because of lack of supervision for their young ones.
- Offer dinner or refreshments so that parents are relieved from the responsibility and hassle of having to provide dinner for their families.
- Canvass the neighborhood to solicit involvement from local businesses.
- Let businesses know that they can get involved by providing monetary support, donating volunteers, allowing employees time to spend with students in school, or simply by attending the school meetings.
- Schedule parent meetings at alternating times to accommodate working parents.
- Provide appropriate volunteer paperwork and information in the reception area so that visitors to the school see it immediately.
- Communication concerning family involvement should be sensitive to multiculturalism so all parents are equally informed.
- Advertise, advertise, advertise!

RECOMMENDED FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT WEBSITES

- www.firstday.org
- www.familyfriendlyschools.org
- www.ncpie.org
- www.pta.org
- www.fathers.com
- www.par-inst.com
- www.parents4publicschools.com
- www.npin.org
- www.fatherhood.org
- www.cleweb.org

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