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## Parent Resource Center

Max Leuchter School

Vineland, New Jersey

The purpose of this partnership program is to increase parental involvement and to improve student achievement in mathematics. Our district moved from a traditional instructional mathematics program to a hands-on manipulative program. Test results indicated that although we were meeting the minimal level of proficiency required by the state, math was the area where we received the lowest scores.

The School Improvement Team decided to open a Parent Resource Center to increase parent involvement and improve student achievement in mathematics. The Center was designed so that it would serve parents, students, and staff as a lending library of hands-on learning materials.

The Parent Resource Center opened on Tuesday, November 5, 1996. The specific goal of the Center is to provide students and their families with the necessary materials and support so that all students can learn and experience success. The Parent Resource Center has provided students and their parents with a wide array of materials and support to enable students and their parents to demonstrate their increased knowledge and to raise ESPA scores. The types of involvement used in our Parent Resource Center are communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

Our Parent Resource Center provides service for 520 students in grades pre-school through four. Our center is staffed by 10 teachers and provides materials and support to 300 families. The center is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.; two teachers are always available to assist parents with any questions as well as with the selection of materials.

In order for our Parent Resource Center to open, we had to build and furnish a room. The building construction and furniture cost \$4,477.31. To operate the center, we needed to purchase a computer, bar code scanner and a printer at the cost of \$1,725.00. To introduce our resource center to our school families and the community, our school hosted an open house and provided dinner and refreshments for a cost of \$1,490.00. Our Parent Resource Center is stocked with a very generous array of educational materials. The cost for purchasing materials was \$2,000.00. Our center is staffed by two elementary school teachers each evening and the cost of salaries is \$19,000.00 for a one year period. During our first year of operation, we did incur some hidden costs. We had to replace batteries in many of our learning games, buy extra labels and ziploc bags for a cost of \$83.24. The Parent Resource Center has been a very successful undertaking for our school. The funding was provided by our School Information Team as part of our sight based planning.

In order to operate our Parent Resource Center effectively, we had to train the teachers who staff the center on how to use the operating software. As software changes occur, additional staff development is provided.

As evident through surveys, interviews, and attendance at workshops and open house activities, this project has proven to be worthwhile. The Parent Resource Center has increased parental involvement, improved student attitudes and improved trust, understanding and cooperation among teachers. The first step in planning our Resource Center was sending a memo to parents and staff members to gather input as to the items they would like to see in the Parent Resource Center. Then a survey of pre and post attitudes was conducted with the students. Responses indicated a more positive attitude toward math after the implementation of the Resource Center. The center is open three nights a week and has averaged approximately 18 parents per night. We surveyed parents in June, 1996, and responses were most favorable. We also conducted interviews with parents, staff and students about the resource center. Some responses suggested areas of improvement such as providing morning hours for parents who work shift work, opening the center Monday through Friday rather than 3 days per week.

Each time a parent utilizes the Parent Resource Center it is considered a transaction. Transactions from September, 1996 through January, 1997 totaled 57 in September, 66 in October, 99 in November, 96 in December and 128 in January indicating that an average of 33% of our parents use the Parent Resource Center each month. It is our belief that such increases will continue and that the Parent Resource Center is a viable asset to our school community.

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