
COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE EXPO

Lowndes County Schools

Valdosta, Georgia

The community of Lowndes County, Georgia, has a lot to offer parents, students, and community members. The Lowndes County Schools Community Educational Resource Expo provided an opportunity to share information about available materials and resources in the community while also promoting school, family, and community partnerships.

Over 800 parents attended the hugely successful Expo held in the community auditorium. Upon entering the auditorium, parents viewed art displays from several Lowndes County schools. Families could register for door prizes as they signed in, and winners for the door-prize drawings were announced at fifteen-minute intervals. After registering for door prizes, parents entered either the stage area to watch children perform or the multipurpose room to peruse vendor displays.

In the multipurpose room, parents and students enjoyed informative displays from seventy-five community resources and toy vendors including Valdosta State University, the county health department, Children’s Advocacy Center, the Armed Forces, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, Sylvan Learning Center, Kay-Bee Toys, Kmart, and many others. Vendors set up professional-quality backboard displays with photos, flyers, and other materials highlighting their particular service or area of expertise. Most vendors laid brochures and free items in front of their displays for pick up by the parents as they browsed the aisles. Parents gathered information on GED classes, had their blood pressure checked by Valdosta State University nursing students, learned about educational toys, and discovered new community resources to support themselves and their children.

After seeing the displays and student performances, children could have fun outside. A football throw and ring toss, music, balloons, and clowns were located just outside the multipurpose room. Students and families also enjoyed hot dogs and drinks on the lawn.

Part of the Expo’s success stemmed from diligent, collaborative preparations. A core group consisting of district leaders, Action Team members, school faculty members, and community partners met on an ongoing basis to implement this practice. There were eleven schools represented from the county school system. Each school chose an area to work on, such as

entertainment, food, advertising, carnival games, resource vendors, toy vendors, and door prizes. This event was partially funded by the Lowndes Education Improvement Foundation (LEIF) and partially sponsored by donations from the vendors.

Parents shared positive and constructive feedback on evaluation forms before leaving the Expo. The district leadership team has since used the evaluations to develop the design for the 2002 Expo scheduled for November 19th. Involving more people in the preparations and implementation, and starting the planning earlier were two of the improvement strategies. Overall, parents benefited from the event, commenting: “This was wonderful;” “I didn’t know there were so many opportunities available in my community for my child or myself;” “Very informational;” “It was great to see the community pull together like this;” and “The children performing really got the parents out.” Lowndes County Schools’ parent involvement programs continue to help families and children have successful lives.

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