

Welcome Back Picnic

*Longfellow Elementary School
Pasco, Washington*

Going back to school at the end of summer vacation is no picnic—unless you go to Longfellow Elementary. Then, your year gets off to a friendly start with an evening of food and fun on the school playground.

Longfellow’s staff invited all of the students and their families to this Welcome Back Picnic as a way for students to meet their teachers, for families to get acquainted with other families and the school staff, and to strengthen the ties between the school and its families with the hope of improved student achievement. Nearly 500 people attended, prompting the organizers to consider it a success.

The idea for the picnic came out of the Action Team for Partnerships’ (ATP) first training session, just after it was formed at the end of the previous school year. A picnic subcommittee set up an August meeting to make the final arrangements. Working with the school cooks, the subcommittee planned the menu and ordered food. A parent volunteer asked a beverage company to donate drinks. Teachers heard about the picnic at a faculty meeting before the school year ended and again at their day retreat. The principal invited families by mail in August.

At the picnic, the staff shared information with students and their families about supplies, scheduling, and daily procedures at the school. Most importantly, students and their parents got to meet their new teacher. Teachers from each grade decorated a table welcoming students to their new grade.

“It was fun for the students to see their teachers in a relaxed, social environment,”

said one parent. Many teachers reported that it was the smoothest first day back that they could remember. “The students seemed more relaxed and there were no first-day jitters,” said one teacher, noting that students knew exactly where to line up when they arrived. Plans are already in the works to make next year’s event bigger and better.

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