

Parent Pancake Data Breakfast

*Weller Road Elementary School
Silver Spring, Maryland*

Pancakes made the data go down better at Weller Road Elementary. After a hot, homemade breakfast, parents were able to digest the details of grade-specific testing and gather ideas on how to help and encourage their youngsters to do well. The principal and staff did the cooking and serving – pancakes, syrup, fruit cups, juice, coffee and tea – for this Parent Pancake Data Breakfast and 132 parents partook in February.

Weller Road Elementary is a Title I school with a culturally diverse student body of 515 students. Data for the 2005-06 school year showed the proficiency rate in grades 3-5 ranging from 71.9% in Grade 3 reading to 85% in Grade 4 math. The school's goal was to increase achievement and raise the percentage of proficient students.

To this end, teachers, staff and administrators got involved with the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) in conducting the pancake breakfast. In addition to planning and preparing breakfast, they gathered and compiled individual student data folders, supervised student activities and collected evaluation data from attendees.

The school publicized the event in multiple languages, through computerized messages, on the marquee in front of the school, on banners and by contacting families personally. The school used Title I funds for parent involvement, as well as administration and staff donations.

Families arrived at the school for breakfast at 8 a.m. and were escorted by students to their grade-specific wing. The meal offered an opportunity for parents to get acquainted. Students liked it, too: "I was excited to eat breakfast at school with my parents and to show them the work I was doing," commented one youngster.

After breakfast, parents went to their children's classrooms, where each teacher presented an overview of test data, testing procedures, and school goals. Teachers also gave parents a folder of their own child's testing data. Hearing about test requirements and practices and exploring test results made the parents more knowledgeable partners in the assessments. With useful information, they can help prepare their children for testing, as well as set expectations. It was expected that students, in turn, would gain from the support of informed parents.

"I liked having a chance to share with parents the kinds of assessments their children have been taking and explain what they are expected to know," said one teacher.

The parents, too, were enthusiastic about the initiative: "We're very thankful that Weller Road provides these opportunities to keep us in close touch with our children's progress. And, this activity provided a warm, delicious breakfast as well!"

The school solicited written evaluations from families in both Spanish and English. Teachers also evaluated the data breakfast.

Weller Road Elementary plans to repeat this event. The ATP hopes to expand it by organizing additional sessions at dinner-time to target parents who are unable to attend a breakfast meeting.

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