

## Community Partner/Side by Side

---

Walton Middle School  
Compton, California

Walton Middle School wanted to increase the involvement of its parents and nearby community. Leaders selected a faith-based program called “Side by Side” to rally support for its students.

The resulting program, Community Partner, brought adults interested in working with students into the school as tutors, mentors and role models. The varied activities of the program provided the personal touch and positive contact to help students build a new level of trust with adults and increase their own confidence, self-esteem and achievement.

The mentors greeted students at school in the morning. They participated in field trips and at monthly Family Nights. Additionally, eight to ten tutors targeted students needing extra help and provided individual academic support and tutoring during the school day, in non-core time, or at home visits.

Each month, the Community Partner program would conduct a Family Night to address topics such as career awareness, college planning and preparation, leadership, and cooking and table etiquette. For example, a policeman, firefighter, doctor, and others were invited to Career Night to describe what their jobs required and the educational paths to these occupations. These evenings, held the third Wednesday of each month, were open to the entire student body and their families, but the targeted students received personal invitations to attend the monthly Family Nights.

There were two field trips during this school year: one to a symphony performance for a tribute to Motown and another to the aquarium. The Community Partner paid for the price of admission and the school district paid for transportation. Students said they look forward to these events because they have so much fun and learn “a lot of cool stuff.”

Walton has been in program improvement status for the past several years, and parent and community involvement has been low, according to a school staff member. The school’s community specialist learned that the administrator of Side by Side was interested in working with the school and its students. A meeting with the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and the Community Program Administrator cemented this new relationship. At subsequent meetings the group worked out the details of the Community Partner program, including dates and activities.

School staff helped plan and implement the activities and also served as chaperones on field trips. Many other community partners helped organize and publicize events, provided guest speakers and food.

“This is a prime example of what can be accomplished when the school and community work together,” said Walton’s principal.

The school thanked Side by Side by recognizing it at the district’s annual volunteer dinner. Additionally, the program won recognition when the host of a district Cable TV Show, entitled “Parent To Parent,” invited two representatives from Side by Side to talk about the outreach program.

*Tony Hicks*  
Community Relations Specialist  
(310) 898-6060  
popeye6green@yahoo.com