

Cultural Night 2007

Weller Road Elementary School
Silver Spring, Maryland

*We are a culturally diverse family
working hand-in-hand towards excellence.*

This motto prompted Weller Road Elementary School's teachers, staff and administration to host Cultural Night 2007, a fashion show that highlighted cultures from 15 countries around the world.

In the 2006-07 school year, the student population at the school was 62.7% Hispanic, 15.7% African American, 11.7% Asian and 9.9% White. Teachers and parents decided to celebrate this great diversity by sharing customs, culturally diverse food, music, dress and performances.

At the event, organizers welcomed families and handed out programs for Cultural Night 2007. Food tables, set up in the gym, were grouped by continent so that families could share their dishes. The principal and involvement coordinator welcomed everyone, followed by the singing of the Star Spangled Banner. Students and staff presented a fashion show featuring traditional dress from Korea, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Haiti, Jamaica, India, Ireland, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Peru, Zaire, Guatemala, Jordan and Bolivia.

Pre-K students followed the fashion show with an interactive music performance. Other presentations included an African dance, Sakura song, Reggaeton dance, tango and disco. Performers included Weller students, teachers, parents and community members.

Middle school students joined in the fun with a demonstration of a Stepper routine. Teachers, administrators and staff performed a special "Dream Girls" selection to end the evening.

Collaboration was the key to the success of Cultural Night 2007. Teachers, staff and administrators created programs, contacted

community partners, and supervised students in weekly rehearsals of performances after school.

Parents bought or found costumes, performed in the show, prepared the food and assisted with advertising. Students practiced diligently and met the behavioral standards set for them to participate in the show. Finally, community members supported the event by attending, donating food and performing.

Students who performed increased their confidence and overcame their fears of performing in front of a crowd. Teachers also noticed that students strengthened their sense of responsibility and commitment.

Parents also noted positive effects of Cultural Night 2007. "I will definitely get more involved as a result of my experience and am determined to get others involved as well," commented one parent.

The positive feedback of Cultural Night 2007 participants encouraged the staff to continue planning events that involve parents and community members. "Every year the event gets better and better," said the principal. Next year's Cultural Night is sure to include even more cultures, participants and community support.

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