

Parental Involvement

Miller Elementary is committed to working with the parents of our students from the concept that they are a child's first teacher. With that in mind, we continuously provide opportunities for our parents to be intricately involved at home and at school. Parents were surveyed during the 2009 -2010 school term to determine their thoughts and perceptions of Miller Elementary. Areas of strength for the school are as follows:

- The school has high expectations for student achievement
- Parents know the curriculum / academic requirements for their child
- Parents are comfortable with school administrators and teachers
- School administrators and teachers welcome parent involvement and volunteerism
- Parents feel welcomed in the school
- Parents are informed about students' academic progress
- Parents are kept involved about school programs including Title I notifications
- Parents are informed of opportunities to participate in school
- The school offers workshops or activities that educate / inform parents about the curriculum and educational goals.
- Parent activities and workshops are offered at various times
- The school provides various activities that allow volunteerism
- Parent activities and opportunities are useful and beneficial
- Timeliness in being informed

The areas needed for improvement included:

- Not being aware of a Parent Resource / Information Center

- Having the opportunity to provide input into decision-making
- Not being aware of the system-wide “Be There” parent involvement campaign

Miller Elementary created the position of Parent Involvement Coordinator (PIC) to address these and other school needs and to sustain positive growth in family/community involvement. Sharing information, resources and data through parent nights, committees, parent conferences, emails, public media, workshops and newsletters is vital to parental involvement. Newsletters, flyers, phone messages, and marquee advertisement are designed to keep the parents informed of events occurring at school. Spanish translations are also made available. The PIC provides school volunteer training on and off site to encourage parental involvement and serves as a liaison for the community and school based personnel. Our Parent Involvement Coordinator strengthens the partnership between the home and school. The PIC continually monitors areas identified as needs, by parents and teachers, for assistance purposes.

Miller provides Strategy Nights for parents where they are invited to come and participate in the actual learning process of the students. This is designed to not only expose the parents to the new standards-based educational approach to learning, but to also help the parents understand what an instructional day is like. This gives them a clearer understanding of how to incorporate learning into the home setting.

Each month teachers offer Open Classroom Times (OCT). This is another formalized avenue designed to invite parents into the classroom setting during at a time when different subjects

are being taught. The parents are encouraged to join in on the class activity that is being addressed. By doing this, they get first-hand experiences on the subject matter, exposure to strategies implemented to work on various skills, and once again, an enhanced understanding of student expectations. As a response to previous parent surveys (requesting that activities be offered at various times), teachers vary the times and dates of their Open Classroom Times. This has proved beneficial in accommodating parental work schedules.

To address the increase in the number of English language learners in our school setting, we have added an ESOL teacher. She works directly with the students and families to ensure that they are included in the educational process. The ESOL teacher translates any communications needed in Spanish or ensures that a translation is available. She also has access to resources that provide translations in other languages as needed.

Teachers send out monthly newsletters designed to keep parents informed about specific skills that are addressed during the month in each subject area. An agenda is provided for each student and these are used as a two-way system to communicate between home and school. The Parent Involvement Coordinator also sends out a monthly school calendar to keep parents informed of events taking place at the school. Each grade level sponsors activities, for their parents, which include PEN or Parent Education Nights. Various topics are chosen and the parents are invited into the school setting to learn about them.

We have several committees that parents are involved in including the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) Parent Action Committee, School Council, and the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). All of these organizations are designed to solicit parent involvement in school activities. These activities cover the instructional realm as well as anything needed to improve the overall operation of the school. For example, the School Council was involved in reading and soliciting feedback on the School-wide Title I Plan. Our Parent Action Committee discussed, drafted and published online the MES 1-Year Action Plan. Volunteer surveys and flyers are sent home informing parents about opportunities that exist and how they can sign up for various workshops and committees.

Additional opportunities are available for parental and family involvement with our school. Parents are invited to attend informative workshops such as family math and science nights, CLIF/Reading night, CRCT Parent Information night, and Strategies Saturdays. PTO programs are held once a month with grade-level performances. A MES Field Day was held during the month of March with activities for the entire family. Parents and community members are also encouraged to help monitor classrooms during standardized testing times.

Strategies for increasing parental involvement at Miller Elementary are:

1. Involving parents on planning committees
2. Surveying parents for topics of interest for workshops and programs
3. Generating more positive notes/ phone calls, Star Student recognition, etc.
4. Encouraging parents to attend Open Classroom Times and Parent Education Nights

5. Encouraging parents to come and volunteer in the school via phone calls, letters, emails
6. Advertise and highlight the Parent Resource Center and parent/student information displays
7. Weekly grade level and monthly school-wide newsletters with an upcoming events section
8. Increasing work-hours for PIC (availability to parents)
9. Meals/Snacks/Prizes/Student Rewards offered to those that attend school events.