

Building *Strong* Family School Connections



Goshen Community School Corporation is Making it Happen!



WE ARE an urban school district of approximately 6,600 students located in the center of Elkhart County in the north central part of the state. We have seven elementary schools, one middle school, one high school and we have an alternative high school program as well. As a district we have a poverty rate of 63% and service a special needs population of 13%.

OUR STUDENTS & FAMILIES create a rich and diverse school community. Language Minority students, those identified as speaking a language other than English, comprise 45.7% of the students in GCS. 22.6% are Limited English Proficient while the balance are Fluent English Proficient. 39 languages other than English are spoken by 2981 of 6545 total students. 2851 or 95.6% speak Spanish. Parents of English language learners place high priority on attending parent teacher conferences. Interpreters are available at many informational meetings. Parent involvement is facilitated by parent liaisons who bridge language and cultural understandings between the school and the community.

OUR TEACHERS We have 28 EL licensed teachers, 9 parent liaisons, 9 EL collaborators and 3 paraprofessionals at the secondary level, Kinder paras at all elementary programs, and 4 central office staff members who support and provide services to EL students and families. Homeroom teachers have been offered SIOP training in the past and have had overview training of the WIDA standards along with Model Performance Indicators which have been written into the curriculum maps for elementary and middle school content areas.

OUR PROMISING PRACTICE of valuing and empowering parents creates strong partnerships. Goshen Community Schools is committed to having parent liaisons at every educational level to build strong family school connections. The goal of our Parent Liaisons is to ensure the social, emotional and academic success of students, empower parents to become active participants in their child's education, and to integrate language minority parents into the school community. They also serve by helping families navigate school structures and connecting them with outside social services. These important members of our team have been trained in "Triple P Parenting" and are dedicated to supporting the home school partnership. The liaisons act as cultural interpreters by modeling outreach strategies for teachers and administrators.

OUR STEPS were developed out of a need to support families. We historically had part time Parent Liaisons in multiple buildings. We realized the potential for support and building strong school family connections. We now have full time Parent Liaisons and provide training to help them in their role to support families. This process was completed through collaborative efforts of district and building staff along with strong leadership in our EL department.

OUR SOURCES

"I really enjoy coming to Family Nights because I learn so many new things every time I come." "I do not know why I am here but my child was excited, so I came to see what it was all about."

"I wish I was young again so I could come to this school and learn the way my child is learning. You all make it fun!"

The above comments came from Chamberlain parents after attending one of the monthly Family Nights hosted by the Chamberlain Crew. These events are designed for whole family involvement and range in variety focusing on math, science and reading to cooking, board games, Bingo, and a night of exercising together. During these events parents help their children make slime, learn about friction, create "lava bottles" (made from cooking oil, food coloring, and Alka-Seltzer), and participate on the fitness trail that is set with various stations throughout the building. Game night and Bingo night are favorites as families sit and spend time playing together.

The Chamberlain Crew believes that education encompasses the lives of students at school and at home. We strive to include and teach parents ways on how they can support the daily education experience of their child. These family nights play a huge part in making that happen.

Delia Murillo, Chamberlain Parent Liaison

For more information about our school or corporation, email: dwoodworth@goshenschools.org
or visit our website: www.goshenschools.org