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*The following is an excerpt from a grant application submitted to the National PTA.*

At Lake Elmo Elementary we are culturally and economically diverse.

√ 25% of our students receive free and reduced lunch.

√ 15% of our students are special education.

√ 5% are limited English proficient.

### **Need**

According to the Harvard Family Research Project, students whose families actively participate in their learning experience perform better in school. Families that feel connected to their school communities have students who perform better in school. Specifically:

- Children in grades K–3 whose parents participate in school activities have high quality work habits and task orientation.
- Children whose parents provide support with homework perform better in the classroom.
- Children whose parents explain educational tasks are more likely to participate in class, seek help from the teacher when needed, and monitor their own work.

Our team of school psychologists, along with our teachers, have identified a variety of barriers to participation and parent engagement. As a community, we are making significant efforts to bridge the connection between home and school. Our efforts are primarily focused on those that may not have been active in the past. By offering various activities and events, we hope to reach out to a larger population of our school community.

### **Program**

We are taking a comprehensive strategy that ensures we are connecting with our students and their families throughout the entire school year. We are adding several new programs, including our Men of Lake Elmo and the Spirit Club, as well as continuing to offer family favorites.

Our Men of Lake Elmo Elementary initiative invites men to become more involved in their child's educational experience. Their initial activity will be Take Your Child to School morning event on Monday, February 14, 2011. We will encourage Dad's, Grandfathers or important male figures to bring their child to school in the morning. They will be able to have breakfast together, hear a short presentation on the importance of their role in their child's life, and then head off on a scavenger hunt exhibiting various student projects throughout our building. There will also be an opportunity to meet teachers and staff. All families who participate will receive a book to take home to encourage reading together. The Men of Lake Elmo will also be volunteering in the classroom to encourage reading during our Read A Thon.

Our Spirit Club is a student directed organization that gathers to discuss youth entrepreneurship and demonstrate practical applications. The Spirit Club also involves many of our special education students. The club will be hosting a free family movie night on January 28, 2011 at school. This event will serve as a kickoff for our Read A Thon, which will run throughout the

entire Read With Me month of February. The Spirit Club will also host a Family Game Night at school in the spring.

Some of the additional no cost activities that will take place throughout the year will include a Meet, Greet and Eat, Spirit Night, lunch in the classroom, Art & Science Fair Read A Thon and a Family Fun Fitness Night.

We realize not all events will appeal to everyone but by offering a multitude of no cost activities on a variety of topics, we will attract a larger percentage of our school community.

### **Impact**

We will be serving our entire school community, which includes Lake Elmo and surrounding suburban cities.

### **Innovation**

We are bringing together a variety of groups to offer participation at many different levels. By involving the Men of Lake Elmo, we are making a greater effort at peer connection. We will be targeting participation from families that may be new to these types of activities. Each of our activities compliments one another. Repetition of our message will help raise awareness and get the kids and their families involved. Providing this connection is critical. The more comfortable and welcomed our families feel, the greater the opportunity that they will become actively involved, provide feedback or seek necessary resources to ensure family success. We are now able to utilize a variety of different tools to promote our activities. These include email, voicemail, our EBackpack system and Facebook. We continue to utilize traditional paper communications as well. Our staff has even done door knocking in certain communities.

### **Partnerships**

Our PTA will be working with our teachers, staff and parent volunteers. This will include our newly formed Men of Lake Elmo group. We will also be working closely with our newly formed Spirit Club student group. Our local community provides a valuable resource, both monetary and by way of leadership, for our students and their families.

### **Meeting Family Standards**

Specifically, the programs mentioned above meet all of the National Standards of Family Engagement.

#### **Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community**

We realize not all events will appeal to everyone but by offering a multitude of no cost activities on a variety of topics, we will attract a larger percentage of our school community. By displaying student projects throughout our building, families are able to connect with their students class work multiple times throughout the year.

#### **Standard 2: Communicating effectively**

We are now able to utilize a variety of different tools to promote our activities. These include email, voicemail, our EBackpack system and Facebook. We continue to utilize traditional paper communications as well. Our staff has even done door knocking in certain communities. If

necessary, we have provided translated communications. Our PTA offers many opportunities for families to provide feedback and input throughout the year.

#### Standard 3: Supporting student success

By engaging our families, we are preparing our students for a lifetime of successful learning by establishing study habits and practices now.

#### Standard 4: Speaking up for every child

As families begin to establish relationships with our teachers and staff, as well as other families, we are empowering them to be able to make the necessary connections to ensure their child's success.

#### Standard 5: Sharing Power

Our school administration has always been extremely community minded. We have a very active PTA which is well received by faculty and staff. If parents are given the opportunity to provide feedback multiple times throughout the year, the PTA can better represent the needs of our community.

#### Standard 6: Collaborating with community

Our local community provides a valuable resource, both monetary and by way of leadership, for our students and their families.

### **Supporting Student Success**

Research shows that if students feel connected to their local school community, they perform better in school. According to the Harvard Family Research Project:

- Children in grades K–3 whose parents participate in school activities have high quality work habits and task orientation.
- Children whose parents provide support with homework perform better in the classroom.
- Children whose parents explain educational tasks are more likely to participate in class, seek help from the teacher when needed, and monitor their own work.

By engaging our families, we are preparing our students for a lifetime of successful learning.

### **Timeline**

Planning is currently underway for all events and activities.

The Men of Lake Elmo are currently planning their event. They are finalizing the menu, preparing the scavenger hunt and ordering the books for prizes.

The Spirit Club has begun choosing the movie and preparing concessions.

The Read A Thon committee has finalized its celebrity readers, the prize and rewards program as well as begun ordering its collection materials.

Publicity for all events has already begun but invitations will be sent out two weeks prior.

Evaluation will take place the day of the events as well as a follow up at the end of the school year.

### **Goals**

Our goal of participating in and hosting all programs is to empower families with ideas for involvement. More specifically, the following;

- √ 30% attendance level in Family Movie Night
- √ 15% attendance level Take Your Child to School Day
- √ 5% attendance level classroom reading volunteers
- √ 30% attendance level in Dr. Seuss Night

### **Outcomes**

By increasing awareness of activities and offering a multitude of different events, we will be reaching a larger population of our school community. With increased awareness and involvement, we will see an increase in student successes and ultimately an increase in test scores.

### **Measurement**

We will receive attendance data from all of our events. We will be offering incentives to complete surveys after each event. This will enable us to determine new participants as well as what can be improved. We use this data to determine immediate needs of our community, develop future events as well as plan meeting topics. At the end of our year, we will do a comprehensive survey to receive overall feedback on our efforts throughout the year. It will also monitor if families have maintained their efforts throughout the year.

Our teachers will be able to provide direct feedback regarding improved classroom performance and our overall test results will demonstrate if all of our efforts have had an impact.

### **Budget**

Breakfast: \$800

Prizes/Awards: \$822

Concessions: \$100

Promotional Supplies: \$100

Movie Licensing: \$75

\$1897

### **Budget Narrative**

We will be providing a light breakfast on our Take Your Child to School Day and providing all families with a book to take home. We need to pay a licensing fee for our family movie night as well as purchase concessions. We will have copying expenses for our promotional materials.