

REPORT FROM PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT GROUP
1-9-08

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research has clearly demonstrated that effective engagement of parent and community resources *improves student achievement and performance* in school. At the same time there are many challenges to effective engagement of parents and community resources, particularly in large and diverse urban schools. Wilson has many parent engagement efforts, such as the PTSA and LSRT, but it has been successful in engaging only some parents and families. In particular it has not successfully engaged the families of many students who have the greatest need for academic and social support. With regard to “Community Engagement” Wilson has successfully engaged many partners for a range of academic and social support services, but there remain opportunities for greater engagement with the local community.

Wilson’s goals for improving parent engagement include:

- Design approaches to parent engagement that effectively engage subgroups of parents whose students have the greatest unmet need for support. These approaches should be designed to effectively overcome common barriers to parent engagement, including language, cultural, and location barriers (e.g. residence distant from Wilson).
- Create a warm and welcoming environment for parents and families and engage parents not just “institutionally” but also at the individual level, stressing personal contact and interaction with faculty, guidance and other staff.

Targeted proposals for improving parent engagement include:

- Orientation: Prior to enrollment, all new Wilson families should participate in a small-group, comprehensive orientation that addresses: parents’ role in student success; introduction to key staff; key school policies; grade-level milestones; and parent support resources.
- Parent Education Programs: There should be multiple approaches to educating parents about their role in their student’s education and about academic resources, testing, etc. workshops, seminars, web-based videos on the Wilson Website. These should in particular seek to help parents understand the role of teachers, counselors and others and how they can access resources at the school.
- Parent Resource Center: Wilson should have a dedicated resource program for parents, including a “movable” site accessible at other locations in the city.
- Special parent engagement programs: For certain groups of students who lack support, Wilson should implement one of the available models for intensively engaging parents who may lack the skills and resources to effectively support their student. For example, the Adolescent Transitions Program provides parents with family management skills for high risk teens.
- Organizational structure: To facilitate these proposals, Wilson’s staff should be restructured into a more comprehensive student and family support division, with

college/career support, guidance, crisis support, the parent center, community partnerships, attendance and health.

With regard to community engagement, Wilson should: seek to increase connections with outside organizations that can provide financial and other resources support; seek to improve its role and the reputation of its students by sponsoring community-oriented service efforts and events; and use the new Pool as a way to bring the community to the school.