

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Washington Center envisions our families, staff and community working together to help our children succeed. This is a shared responsibility. We are committed to exploring and developing new strategies for involving community resources to help our children to achieve full potential for independence and quality of life.

Present Role of Our Parent Community

We value our parents as the ultimate and expert resource for each student. Because we serve non-verbal students, we consider communication with families an essential part of our program. We sponsor several parent participation activities throughout the year. A communication system is mandated for each classroom teacher.

Prior to school's opening, parents and students attend the Meet the Teacher afternoon event at which time they meet the staff, tour the school and receive information regarding our PTA including ways in which they can become involved in their child's classroom. PTA and School Improvement Committees are active groups that depend on parent membership and participation.

Every month a classroom newsletter and calendar are sent to each home. Information about class units, activities and trips is included. Since our students cannot verbally communicate events with school and families, several classes utilize a BIGmack voice output device to share information. Every teacher has a website that includes classroom schedule, syllabus, and current school news. Teachers also maintain a notebook of daily written messages. Regular phone calls and e-mails provide another correspondence source for teachers and parents. The PTA also sponsors a quarterly newsletter for all of our families. This newsletter contains information regarding all aspects of the current school program and activities with a focus on parents as partners. Parent survey comments encourage the continuation of daily notes and website communications.

Parents are urged to play a vital role in the functioning of the school. Parents are encouraged to be involved in our program through participation in special events scheduled throughout the year. Along with Meet the Teacher, the PTA has sponsored Family Night Events, PTA informational meetings, and the Walk and Roll community-wide fund raiser. Monthly lunch sales to the staff contribute to PTA funds along with Honey Ham coupon sales. Special seasonal activities such as Book Fair, Boo in the

School, Challenge Day, Valentines Pageant, Special Olympics, Walk and Roll, Craft Day, and Awards/Graduation Ceremonies all include family invitations. Opportunities for participation are provided for working parents to make contributions by selling Honey Baked Hams, sending candy for Halloween, contributing items for Craft Day sales and furnishing desserts for Teacher Appreciation Week. Our parent involvement fundraisers provide money for class community experience field trips and classroom grant activities.



Washington Center's PTA annually sponsors Family Night

In providing a means for parent involvement in their child's education, we created a home literacy program, The BIGmack Attack for Literacy, involving adapted readers and voice output devices. Parents received in-school training for this program. Staff anticipates a continued increase for subsequent years, as the home-literacy program remains popular with parents, students and teachers. Christ Church Service Learning volunteers serve as Peer Reading Buddies. Students are awarded certificates for reading ten or more books.

With our School Strategic Plan, more relevant Professional Development opportunities were provided. We developed and distributed special parent surveys related to our unique school. Results indicated parent approval and satisfaction with our program. A few updated comments request after school care and current seminars for speech pathologists in the area of articulation and pronunciation skills for students with autism, down syndromes and cerebral palsy.

Parents of Beck Academy students have become volunteer supporters as members of SIC, testing monitors, and active in fund raisers. Even with these efforts, the majority of our parents do not become actively involved in the school. Parents who are able to

volunteer help with classroom needs, create bulletin board displays, serve on the PTA Board and chaperone community trips. Few parents volunteer during school hours due to our diversity of geographic areas served, work schedules and the demands of caring for a special needs child. Lack of a large volunteer parent pool, along with shrinking district budgets, increasing diversity in student disabilities and our growing enrollment makes finding partnerships an immediate need. It is also clear that we must develop new strategies for engaging the parent and community support for our students' success. In addition, beyond engaging our parent community, we need to explore partnerships with local businesses, schools, universities and charitable organizations.

Washington Center recognizes that parental involvement is one of the greatest contributors to student success in school. We have determined that we need to provide some well-placed support for our students' families so that they, in turn can support their children's education. Involving parents in learning instructional and care-giving strategies should be one of our goals. PTA and SIC work together to develop strategies to generate parent and community involvement. Ultimately, we would like to have a clearly articulated partnership structure for the school, so that our partners' efforts directly impact our students' success in school and in life.

Present Role of Our Business and Community

We rely on partnerships to continue the emphasis of our programs. Our program is so unique and our student needs are so diverse, that traditional instructional materials are inappropriate. District funding does not provide enough money to purchase the necessary materials and equipment. Funds and services provided by our valuable partnerships provide the means to create the learning experiences needed for our students. It is our belief that our students have much to give as well as learn from their community. Interactions with volunteers provide windows to the community. Students learn real world information while practicing skills in the community. Business partners and volunteers reflect that their experiences with Washington Center students have enriched and enhanced their lives. We always offer two-way partnerships.

Over the past three years, Washington Center funding through grants, partnerships and donations has averaged approximately \$52,000 yearly with a total nearing \$157,000. Our fourth annual PTA sponsored *Walk and Roll* has created funding sources for school projects and programs. More than 250 participants helped to raise these funds. Our

partnerships have brought more resources to student learning and the school through volunteers and services. For example, the Greenville Women Giving of \$26,000 made possible the much needed purchase of Promethean Boards, which provide cutting edge technology for our classrooms.

Our volunteer pool continues to make a valuable contribution to Washington Center. Volunteers come from business and civic organization partnerships, parents and family members, and community volunteers. Volunteer hours continue to increase with a total of 7,401.58 hours during the 2009 – 10 school year.

Communication has expanded. Faculty, therapists, and administration create and maintain personal pages for Washington Center's website. Each week a selected teacher also contributes photos and articles to the front page of the school web page highlighting special achievements and activities. The school website also provides links to recent photos, handbooks, and weekly menus. The PTA quarterly newsletter, *The Seagull Express*, continues to provide pertinent school information. Teachers communicate with parents using email. The principal routinely emails updates and information to the staff. Classroom phones provide parent/teacher access. A Headliner Program for routine media contacts continues to be maintained. With the assistance of the staff, the Administrative Assistant weekly sends school news to media contacts. Weekly articles are published in *City People* and local papers; also, *The Greenville Greer News*, *The Greenville Journal*, *The Spartanburg Herald*, *The Taylors Greer School News*, *The Journal*, *The Travelers Rest Monitor*, *The Tribune Times*, and *Upstate Parent* carry news of special school activities. *The Greenville Magazine* and *News 4* have spotlighted our programs in the past. This year News Channel 4 awarded Ted Mickens the Golden Apple Award. With the teamwork of our business partners and community support, our program can continue and expand. We plan to stay focused on continuing the activities that have been such a big "win" for the students and our vision.

Our Business Partnerships are described below:

- Bi-Lo Charities: Funding for playground, Multi-sensory room, instructional technology (Promethean Boards)
- Five local Knights of Columbus councils: donations for instructional materials
- Operation Hope: money for physical therapy equipment (M.O.V.E.).

- Carolina First Bank and Chic-Fil-A: Special Olympic T-Shirts
- TPM and Company: Donated art supplies and scrap materials
- RBC Insurance: Gingerbread house
- Chic-Fil-A: Breakfast sandwiches for staff
- Operation Santa: gifts for needy students sponsored by the Cliffs Community
- Klaver Klub: Sponsor Donation Walk & Roll, Christmas gifts for students, assistance during Family Night and Walk & Roll, PTA memberships
- Krispy Kreme: Doughnuts for staff
- HairSay Haircuts for Students
- Christ Church School: Reading Buddies, volunteer at various school activities, and donate art supplies for Craft Day
- Furman Service Corps: Sponsored Christmas gifts



*Washington Center Principal
Dr. Wanda Brownlee and
Washington Center student enjoy
Promethean Board instruction
funded by a Bi-Lo Charities Grant*

Donation Summary

The following companies and organizations have donated funds to Washington Center during the 2009-2010 school year:

- BiLo Charites
- General Donations
- Greenville Women Giving
- Knights of Columbus
- Macy's
- United Way
- Washington Center PTA including 82 individual and corporate Walk and Roll donors

Next Steps

- Coordinating parent volunteer opportunities during Open House
- Survey to determine what classroom teachers need in relation to volunteer and monetary needs.
- Encourage the expression of appreciation for volunteer work and relay the results of their work with our students (Dog Therapy / Reading Buddies)
- Continue Thank You Committee responsibility of creating a school wide token of appreciation for services and donations.
- Expand mutual activity opportunities and involvement with the Sara Collins student body.
- Continue to document the contact plan to insure continuation over time. Administration and Thank You Committee share the responsibility of listing donors, contact person, their address and their emphasis of funding.
- Continue to invite new and existing business and community partners to visit.

- Seek sources to solicit and promote business partnership through PTA, SIC Boards and Administration.



*Carolina Dog
Therapy visits
Washington
Center on a
monthly basis.*