Tyler Principal’s Report

Brief Summary of Concerns and Suggestions for Parental Involvement:
- More notification for parent events, and potentially one set day for such events.
- Maintaining a regular newsletter.

Other concerns or desires expressed by parents:
- More cultural activities – plays, art, dance, or music
- More speakers, specifically dealing with a wide range of careers
- Communication between the school and the after school programs.
- Follow-up—once the school and parents have a conversation, there needs to be follow up from the school regarding outcomes, even negative ones.

Further Programs for Center for Inspired Teaching to Research
   - DC Voice’s Parental Involvement Specialist
   - Break the Chain

Sampling and Recruitment

   The sample included all volunteers from Tyler Elementary School willing to participate in the study that we were able to reach. For recruitment, we first spoke to parents at one of the morning meetings with the social worker. Then I spoke with teachers asking them to give you the names and numbers of parents. Finally, I also spoke with the president of the PTA asking for assistance reaching out to parents.

Phone Procedures

   Due to ease of reaching participants, most cases were obtained through phone interviews. Each phone interview took between 15-30 minutes. After the attached phone protocol is read and verbal consent is obtained, the researcher began asking the general questions (attached).
Sample Size

I could only contact five parents. However, these parents still provided significant information concerning Tyler Elementary parental involvement because they crossed grade levels.

What is the current level of involvement at Tyler Elementary School?

Of the parents currently reached at Tyler Elementary School, four out of five report having a lot of involvement, while one reported a little involvement, as shown in Table 5. When asked about their roles, four of the parents defined their role as going into the school and “making” teachers talk to them and thus take charge of their child’s education.

The parent reporting a little involvement had just transferred her student to Tyler Elementary School at the beginning of the year. She felt that the previous school was more welcoming to parents and that Tyler Elementary School did not encourage any parental involvement. This parent claimed that her previous school had specific programs set up for parents to come into the school, volunteer, and meet the teachers. However, this parent had not heard of any such programs here. However, on an important note, the class her child is enrolled in has a teacher who does not let anyone into her classroom including Inspired Teaching’s mentor for her, so this could be a specific issue to this class.
Table 1: This table describes Tyler Elementary School’s parents’ self assessment of their level of involvement at the school. They were given the options of none, a little, some, and a lot.

Problem II

What are the ways in which parents are involved?

As Table 2 below displays, four out of five parents went to monthly meetings organized by the social worker (the meeting where parents were first drawn from for participation in the interviews). Otherwise, one was the PTA president, one worked with an afterschool program, and the others reported no involvement in other activities. These parents reported that there was not much to become involved in. All did say that they were involved in activities that provided notification about meetings or events.
Table 2: Table 2 displays the percentage of respondents involved in various activities at Tyler Elementary School.

**Problem 3**

*In what ways can the school improve/increase parental involvement?*

As Table 7 reports, four out of five parents expressed issues with communication between parents and the school. One of these four felt that it was the parents’ responsibility to improve, while the other three felt that the school needed to improve the communication. Two specifically mentioned a communication issue with the principal in
which she would not make time for parents. In contrast, another parent said that the principal was great and had a lot of great ideas, but no teachers to “back her up.” Regardless of perception the ultimate finding is that better communication is needed.

Furthermore, other communication issues within the school were mentioned. Specifically, one parent saw a great disconnect between the after school programs and the actual school. Although the programs were housed within the school building, the parent noted that the teachers and staff at Tyler Elementary School did not know anything about the program and that they were not working together. This information relates that everyone is not on the same page.

To improve communication, one parent voiced a desire for progress reports that she mentioned that the school sent out in the beginning of the year, but then ceased to send out. One other parent mentioned fostering respect between parents and teachers because she felt that teachers did not respect parents and found them “uneducated” and useless in the classroom. Furthermore, this parent voiced an age issue. She is a young parent and felt that the staff disregarded her opinions because of her age. She said: They look at me like I don’t know what I’m talking about, but I’m a parent too. I know my kids. She especially voiced concerns that the social workers did not care about her opinion and on one instance simply seemed to ignore what she said.

Similarly, one parent figure, who was actually a grandparent, felt that the school excluded grandparents who actually have as large of a role as the parents. She voiced that “They only want parents” and “I try to be involved but can’t.” This raises issues as to whether other guardian figures are as welcome in the school as other parents. Two other parents raised issues of being welcome with one reporting her involvement as a
result of feeling welcome, and one reporting not being involved due to feelings of being welcome by the teachers.

Several parents reported reasons that they had good communication at Tyler Elementary School. Three of the parents noted how they were down at the school frequently and in the hall attempting to talk to teachers. Another parent felt valued because her child’s teacher has the parent’s phone number and calls the parent during classroom hours whenever there is a problem in the classroom.

None of the parents interviewed at Tyler Elementary School reported issues with scheduling. However, most of them were the ones in attendance at the meeting making the issue not relevant to the sample, but not necessarily generalizable to the whole.

There were some activities that parents wished to see and be able to have involvement in. One noted how “volunteering is not always what’s best,” but if they had a parent’s center where she could come in and do some work, not necessarily in the classroom, for the teacher, it would be helpful. Furthermore, she noted that if there were opportunities for the parents to gain something from being at the school, many more would come. For example, if there were computers that they could use so that they could do something for themselves as well as be at the school to assist. However, years ago, the school had a Parent Center with GED classes, a laundry room, and computers; but few parents used these services. Therefore, further exploration into the previous Parent Center must be investigated.

Finally, three parents specifically noted a desire to be involved in cultural activities with all specifically noting music, and one noting drama, and another noting art.
They felt this would benefit kids and be a more interesting way to be involved at the school.

Recommendations:
- Some principals have set aside one hour a week to have a parent tea where the principal promises to be in her office and ready to meet with parents. This preemptive community building can make the appearance of more accessibility and openness to parental involvement without the craziness of having people come every day (though it does not mitigate the need for principal/parent pieces each day, but just gives some of the less urgent issues a time and place for discussion)
- Obtain a volunteer parent-teacher coordinator from one of the local universities. Sometimes these students will be able to work as much as 20 hours if they are signed off for credit. This will allow one person to be the central contact for all parent related activities, so both teachers and parents will have a person to address concerns to. Inspired Teaching will contact the universities about a parent-teacher coordinator if you express interest.
- More notification for parent events, and potentially one set day for such events. Maintaining a regular newsletter.