

## Section XIII

## Parent and Community Involvement

**Parent Involvement**

We know that our success as a school depends on the support of our parents, and we look forward to forming a positive partnership with each family. We expect a lot from members of the Vision Prep community; in turn, parents can expect a lot from us. All families will have the phone numbers and emails of teachers and the school to reach out if they have questions.

We meet with parents throughout the school year: in group orientation sessions on one-on-one meetings before the school year begins; in open houses in the third week of school; in family nights throughout the year; and in formal conferences three times a year. We are dedicated to meeting with each parent and expect a 100% rate for parent teacher conferences. We strive to strengthen relationships with parents as scholars get older. In fifth grade, we guide parents through the middle school application process.

Although these formal parent sessions are critical, the key to our strong parent relationships is ongoing communication. All staff members return parent calls and emails within twenty-four hours, and staff members contact parents with every behavior concern that merits a community violation or a detention. We don't just call parents for the negative though; we also call home every time that a scholar earns a shout-out during Community Meeting.

Vision Prep will send home a monthly calendar and monthly newsletter both will be available in hard copy and electronically on our website. Scholar work will be sent home every Tuesday so that a routine is developed for parents to know when to expect to see their child's weekly work. In addition parents will receive mid-quarter progress reports and quarterly report cards. Scholar grades will also be available to parents/guardians and families by a secure, web-based school management system like RenWeb so that scholars and families can log in at any time to monitor progress.

Parental satisfaction will be gauged by an annual parent survey, distributed in multiple home languages; this survey will give parents an opportunity to express their relative satisfaction with all parts of the school program. The results of these surveys will be reported to the Board of Directors and also to the authorizer in our annual report. We will also assess parental satisfaction through scholar attrition rates, looking most closely at those parents who leave Vision Prep for another Memphis school (rather than those parents who move away from the district).

**Examples of Parent Involvement and Communication**

Vision Prep views parental involvement as essential to scholar success and recognizes that children learn best when parents are engaged in their education. To facilitate parent and guardian participation in creating a stronger school community and to build healthy home-school partnerships with all of our families, Vision Prep parents/guardians are expected to become involved in the following ways:

- **CONTRACT OF MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES:** As stated earlier, before the school year begins parents/guardians voluntarily sign a contract of mutual responsibilities (see Appendix B). This contract, signed by all Vision Prep scholars and teaching staff, brings together the school and each family together and makes all stakeholders aware for the expectations for which they will hold each accountable.
- **SUPPORTING HOMEWORK SUCCESS:** Homework is an important component Vision Prep's rigorous emphasis on literacy and mathematics. Parental support during homework assignments is the most critical and consistently available avenue for effective parent participation. For some parents, the amount and rigor of the homework can take some time to adjust to. As a result, Vision Prep teachers send home helpful tips to lead to homework success, such as the *Supporting Homework Success* document found in Appendix P. As with all communications home, parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher if they have any questions. Vision Prep will also host two workshops for parents of incoming kindergarteners to coach parents on how to help their children with literacy and mathematics homework at an age when parent help with homework is essential.
- **WEEKLY INFORMATION FOLDERS:** As mentioned earlier, each week parents receive a blue folder with all announcements, permission slips, a monthly calendar, their child's behavior chart and all weekly graded work. These folders are signed and sent back to school as evidence that the parent has received and read the information.

- **PARENTS PICK UP REPORT CARDS AT SCHOOL:** All Vision Prep parents pick up their children's report cards at the end of each quarter during the school year during a scheduled parent/teacher conference. At that time, teachers and/or other staff members are available to discuss with parents their children's progress.
- **VOLUNTEER HOURS:** All Vision Prep parents or guardians are required to volunteer 8-10 hours of their time throughout the school year. The volunteer hour requirement engages parents in school operations and fosters a tremendous sense of community. Parents who volunteer to work directly with children or chaperone field trips will be required to be finger printed, complete a background check and meet any other requirements mandated by Memphis City Schools for adults volunteering at school. Parents must schedule their participation in volunteer activities in advance. The Student Supports Coordinator is responsible for the scheduling, recording and reporting the data for volunteer hours. Sample volunteer activities which may be counted toward the hourly requirement are listed below:

#### During School Hours

- *Arrival and Dismissal Monitor*
- *Breakfast, Lunch or Recess Assistant*
- *Field trip Chaperone*
- *Classroom Assistant*
- *Main Office Assistant*
- *Library Volunteer*
- *PE/Art/Music Helper*
- *Career Day Speaker*
- *Outside the Classroom Volunteer (copying, laminating, filing, assembling classroom*

#### After School Hours/Other Opportunities

- *Special Event Volunteer*
- *After School Program or Extracurricular Activity Volunteer*
- *Community Outreach Volunteer*
- *Landscaping Volunteer*
- *Attendance at any school celebrations, events, fundraisers, workshops, & meetings*
- *At-Home Volunteer (assembling classroom games & supplies, cutting, decorating, etc.)*

### Community Involvement

Because we are tentatively targeting the Whitehaven community, members of the Board have begun to cultivate relationships with Hands Across Memphis, Miracle Temple Ministries and Agape/Powerlines. City-wide we also have close ties to Memphis Athletic Ministries, Streets Ministries, the Kroc Center and the Boy Scouts. Upon chartering Vision Prep will partner with some or all of these organizations and formally plan for ways to mutually serve Vision Prep scholars and their families. Letters of Support appear at the end of this section.

#### Community Awareness Involvement and Meetings:

- *Miracle Temple Ministries:* Beginning in August 2011, Tom Benton, proposed school leader of Vision Prep met with the church leadership at Miracle Temple Ministries (Dr. Benjamin Smith and Pastor Fannie Kelley) in Whitehaven to discuss a possible leasing agreement at the church on Millbranch in Whitehaven. The church leaders and Mr. Benton perceived a need for a quality elementary school in the area. To pursue other community organizations and potential school parents in the neighborhood Mr. Benton was offered and accepted office space within the church administrative building to use as a base to write the charter application and meet with others in the community. While a leasing agreement was discussed no formal agreement has been reached.
- *Agape Child and Family Services - Powerlines Community Network:* After some networking, Tom Benton became aware of the Powerlines Community Network's commitment to on-site service to students and families within Whitehaven and other low income Memphis apartment communities. On Wednesday, March 28 he met with Kristee Bell (Director of Powerlines), David Jordan (Executive Director of Agape) and Lori Humber (Volunteer Coordinator of Agape). Among the discussion topics were: making parents aware of the after-school tutoring services available at Powerlines Networks in specific apartment communities, making recruitment and admissions brochures available to families attending Powerlines sessions and scheduling informational Vision Prep speaking engagements within apartment communities.
- *Hands Across Memphis Summer Enrichment Closing Program, July 24 2012:* Marcia Thurmon, director of Hands Across Memphis, invited Tom Benton to give short informational speech to the 300+ attendees at the Summer Enrichment closing program (location - 3750 Millbranch Road in Whitehaven). Parents of prospective Vision Prep students and other adults were offered the opportunity to sign a petition of support for the school after the program and ask questions. Approximately 100 signatures on these petition pages can be found in Appendix O. The director has agreed to offer preferential spots each summer to Vision Prep scholars and families.
- *STREETS Ministries (Graham Heights):* In order to reach out to at-risk families whose first language is not English, in coordination with the STREETS Graham Heights director, Reggie Davis, the Vision Prep Principal,

Tom Benton will schedule a Vision Preparatory Charter School informational community meeting at this largely Hispanic STREETS site in the spring of 2013.

**Volunteer Opportunities**

While Vision Prep requires parent volunteerism, our school also recognizes the importance of including those in the community who are willing to donate time and energy to improve our school and scholar performance. The Vision Prep board and staff members will use their associations with FedEx, Fox 13 television, The Poplar Foundation, the Memphis legal bar association, Miracle Temple Ministries and others to actively seek outside volunteers for volunteer opportunities listed on the previous page. To make this process more efficient, the Vision Prep website will include an interactive volunteer page like the sample found in Appendix Q. As is required of parent volunteers, all outside volunteers who interact with students will be required to be fingerprinted and must submit to a background check as well as meet any other volunteer requirements mandated by Memphis City Schools.