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Lincoln Heights Elementary School

Family Connections Center/Program

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**Lincoln Heights**

**Family Connections Center**

**Proposal Summary**

Lincoln Heights Elementary seeks to become a community school that will integrate the best educational practices with a wide range of vital in-house health and social services to ensure that children are physically, emotionally, and socially prepared to learn. Community schools strengthen families and communities so they are better able to support student success. Lincoln Heights will provide these services by partnering with Wake County Public School System, Wake County Human Services and other community resources. The project’s initial financial request will include funds for 12 hours per week of a Community Support Person(s), four computers and one printer, cost for handouts, brochures, and daily supplies. Donations for furniture from the community and WCPSS warehouse supplies will furnish the Family Connections room. These supplies will allow for community information, community resource building, and parent education. **The Family Connections Center, in addition to the existing Lincoln Heights Elementary School program, will result in increased parent and family involvement and community partnerships. The expected outcome is increased student achievement and success.**

**Organization History**

Lincoln Heights was built in 1964. It became a Gifted and Talented (GT) Magnet in 1982. By 1996, the GT Magnet model was no longer successful at attracting students to the program due to the changing student demographics. New schools in the immediate area opened and provided alternative choices. As a result, enrollment, student achievement, and morale were down. It was time for a pro-active change that would draw more students back to Lincoln Heights. Based on our deepened understanding of the components of an effective school program, the Community Model Magnet was developed and approved by the Board of Education in 1996. Lincoln Heights Community Model Magnet School became a successful and popular magnet school that attracted many students, achieved excellent academic results and developed an outstanding faculty. Lincoln Heights received a Magnet Merit Award as a Magnet School of Distinction in 2006.

The Board of Education voted in 2007 to eliminate the Lincoln Heights magnet program. Four other schools lost their magnet status. The Board stated that the affected schools no longer needed a magnet program to achieve the following objectives:

* Reduce high concentrations of poverty and support diverse populations,
* Maximize use of school facilities, and
* Provide expanded educational opportunities

Magnet staff and resources were reduced through a three year phase-out process. Lincoln Heights became a Targeted Assistance Title 1 school in 2009. In 2012, Lincoln Heights was granted Title 1 School-Wide status.

The following graphs and tables show school data and demographic information before and after magnet status and during the Title 1 transition stages.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **School Year** | **Percent Proficient in Reading and Math** | **District Proficiency scores** |
| **2005-2006** | 77% | 79.1% |
| **2006-2007** | 81.3% | 80.3% |
| **2007-2008** | 69.6% | 71.6% |
| **2008-2009** | 70% | 77.0% |
| **2009-2010** | 69% | 78.4% |
| **2010-2011** | 68% | 80.2% |
| **2011-2012** | 68% | 82.1% |

**Subgroups - 2006**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Program** | **Total** | **Percent** |
| Academically Gifted | 49 (2005 data) | 8% |
| Free/Reduced Lunch | 171 | 27.10% |
| Limited English Proficiency | 11 | 1.75% |
| Students with Disabilities | 127 | 19.60% |
| Total Enrollment | 603 (2005) |  |

**Subgroups - 2012**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Program** | **Total** | **Percent** |
| Academically Gifted | 15 | 3% |
| Free/Reduced Lunch | 339 | 66.9% |
| Limited English Proficiency | 74 / 126 Hispanic students | 15% / 24% |
| Students with Disabilities | 101 | 19.9% |
| Total Enrollment | 507 |  |

Even though the “Lincoln Heights Community Model Magnet School” sign no longer exists, Lincoln Heights is still a school that serves the surrounding community. In fact, 95% of our students live within 10 miles of the school. Many of our current students are the children of former students who attended Lincoln Heights when they were in elementary school. The parents have many fond memories and share that there is a sense of comfort knowing that their children are in our care.

Although Lincoln Heights has faced many changes and challenges, it remains a unique community-based school with a rich history of developing the whole child through engaging educational experiences, large blocks of uninterrupted time for reading and math, project based learning activities, community partnerships and reduced class sizes. The reduced class sizes enable teachers to identify individual student academic, emotional and developmental needs in a more responsive manner.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **School** | **2010-2011** | **2011-2012** |
| Lincoln Heights | **Number of Students Referred for Psychoeducational Evaluations (Initial referrals)**  **28**  Percent that qualified 96% | **Number of Students Referred for Psychoeducational Evaluations (Initial referrals)**  **21**  Percent that qualified 95% |
| **Comparison Schools**  \*Zebulon Elementary | **Number of Students Referred for Psychoeducational Evaluations (Initial referrals)**  **22** | **Number of Students Referred for Psychoeducational Evaluations (Initial referrals)**  **14** |
| \*East Garner Elementary | **Number of Students Referred for Psychoeducational Evaluations (Initial referrals)**  **16** | **Number of Students Referred for Psychoeducational Evaluations (Initial referrals)**  **8** |
| \*Aversboro Elementary | **Number of Students Referred for Psychoeducational Evaluations (Initial referrals)**  **11** | **Number of Students Referred for Psychoeducational Evaluations (Initial referrals)**  **5** |

\***Comparison Schools have similar populations in number of students and demographic groups. We were not able to obtain information on the percentage of students who qualified for special education services.**

An additional benefit of our focus and commitment to reduced class sizes has been the strong relationships that have developed between teachers, the school, and families. Parents/guardians then feel comfortable sharing their concerns with teachers, support staff, and administration. Parents/guardians trust that Lincoln Heights is a safe place where their children are nourished and will not only learn, but grow into independent problem solvers and critical thinkers. We have fostered those connections through a dedicated staff, as evidenced by low staff turnover, and many families who have had multiple children report that Lincoln Heights is the best choice for their children and family.

Another challenge that is not unique to Lincoln Heights, but is gaining public awareness across the nation is poverty. The recent Chicago teachers strike is an example of this very issue. As Michelle Rhee, a leading reform advocate states, “Poverty presents huge challenges in our schools. But expectations of academic success for a child should never hinge on the circumstances of his or her birth.” (Simon, 2012)

The Lincoln Heights Elementary community has an innovative and proactive response to this challenge. With this partnership and financial support, we will not only provide additional resources to our students and their families, but we will also increase the opportunities for our students to have successful futures and hope. (While we do have measurable outcomes, there are some things that can only be measured by the heart!)

**Background**

We understand that in order to engage some of our parents and students, we must first help them with basic needs (Maslow Hierarchy of Needs), including food, housing and medical care. Due to jobs, transportation difficulties (no public transportation in this area) and child care challenges, the traditional 9:00-5:00 times to access these services do not meet their needs. These challenges may be amplified in groups such as Hispanic families who do not have extended family in the local area, families of children with disabilities, single parent families or extended family members (including grandparents) raising children.

Many Hispanic families are living in N.C. while the majority of their extended family is not in the US. According to Marotta and Garcia (2003), Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the United States. Unfortunately, many children of color, a group that includes Latinos, score below their peers on all measures of academic achievement (Bali & Alvarez, 2004). Studies show that student achievement is enhanced by parental involvement (Ost, 1988) but “effectively engaging parents from Latin communities remains a challenge” (Quintanar & Warren, 2008). In a small, qualitative study by Quintanar and Warren (2008), Latino parents of elementary students in a low-income community in Southern California stated that the presence of a volunteer room at their children’s schools was a “critical factor” in their commitment to volunteering regularly. Not only was the room a place where the volunteers completed tasks for the teachers and the school, but it was also a place where parents built friendships and developed supportive relationships with each other. This may be especially important for an immigrant family for whom extended family may not be available to help when help is needed. Another kind of support provided by the Family Connections Center is education. Schools in the United States, when compared to schools in other countries, work differently and have different expectations of both children and parents. By providing parents and guardians with a resource center, they can learn from professionals and other parents about how the educational system works here. Examples of the kinds of education that could be provided are how parent-teacher conferences work, homework policies, Title1 Reading and Math Home Connection support, and how to decipher a report card. To summarize, “the creation by society of a more family-supported approach in schools would assist the optimum development of children. Parent involvement in education leads to growth in other areas of life; therefore support for parent involvement is really support for families and society” (Hamilton & Osborne, 1994).

In addition to a population that is diverse in ethnicity, the school also provides services to students with disabilities who are in AU Pre-K, AU1, AU2, and ED classes. Lincoln Heights has four self-contained classes for students with disabilities, and many other students with disabilities who are mainstreamed into the regular education environment. Parents of students with disabilities have a unique set of challenges and require a variety of support. They need a place to get resources, connect with other parents, and learn specific ways to support their children. While there are many resources available to parents of students with disabilities, parents do not always know what is available to them or how to ask for help. Often parents of students with disabilities feel as if they are alone and that no one can understand what they are going through. The AU self-contained classes offered a series of parent information sessions through monthly evening meetings during the 2009-2010 school year. Parental/guardian attendance ranged from 10-14 participants per session. The participants were eager to share and learn about a variety of topics. The interest and consistent participation validated the notion that there IS a need for support for parents of students with disabilities.

The Student Support Staff at Lincoln Heights have encountered more grandparents who are raising their grandchildren, and many grandparents do not know what resources are available or how to access support for the children they are raising. Due to informal agreements among family members, some grandparents have not attained the formal, legal documents needed to support academic and health needs that would allow them to access community resources. Students who struggle at school are often in need of additional support at home to increase their academic and behavioral skills. In order to share ways that parents can support their students at home, as well as to inform parents of the assistance that will be given to their student by school staff, the school offers meetings for parents with teachers, school administrators, and student support staff.

Single parents are often working and cannot come to school for these meetings. Parents often express frustration about NEEDING a job in order to provide for their family; yet their job prevents them from being available during school hours. In addition, child care for parent-teacher conferences is often a concern for single parents.

The Lincoln Heights staff has already established many partnerships within the community to address the needs of our students and families. Programs such as the following are well established and are operating effectively:

* Before and After School Care -- directed by classroom teachers and provides homework support
* Read and Feed – weekly non-profit support group focusing on family education and increased involvement with their childrens’ education, while providing a well-balanced hot meal
* Energize – diabetes program sponsored by WakeMed, focuses on weight management and exercise
* Power Packs – partnership with John Deere Corporation and the Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC, provides weekly food distribution to 75 students
* Ready to Learn Center – early intervention program from Project Enlightenment
* Southern Wake Faith partnerships- provide healthy snacks, shoes, clothing, furniture, school supplies, and emergency funds for families for rent, electricity, etc.
* Wake County Human Services- winter clothing and outerwear assistance
* YMCA – after school tutoring program that provides homework assistance and targeted remediation, based on classroom teacher collaboration
* Read a Book / Get a Book – motivational reading program sponsored by the Rotary Club that gives students books and encourages reading at home
* Holiday Outreach – Local churches provide holiday gifts and meals

**Program Description**

## The Family Connections Center would provide a physical place for families of all backgrounds to connect with one another, to support each other and create a stronger community network. The concept of a family connections center has been integral in the development of home-school relationships in other schools and districts.

This concept is especially important for families of students with disabilities. Lincoln Heights is fortunate to have a wide range of ages of students with disabilities. This would enable a parent of a preschool parent and a parent of a 5th grader to discuss issues and concerns facing them at different developmental stages. Parents will be able to attend workshops on a variety of needs, such as IEPs, community resources, structure at home, behaviors, and transitions. Parents can learn about relevant topics and support one another.

The addition of a Family Connections Center will provide a physical space not only for parents/guardians to network, but also for parents/guardians to work with liaisons and identify areas for adult education and leadership development. Access to computers and the internet, with support on site to complete Human Services applications and access resources, affords parents/guardians the ability to get what they need within the constraints of their life. The Human Resources services that would be available are, as follows:

* Medicaid and Health Choice applications site (on line)
* Food stamp Application site ( on line)
* Job Sources (on line)
* WIC (food infants/nutrition support)
* Parent health education
* Family support including Human Capital Development (Human Services Project of Support)
* Immunization & Dr. appointments, including dental (phone # and nurse support for these)
* Wake County Resource Guide (on line)

Common barriers to participation in the school setting, such as child care and transportation, will be addressed; and potential solutions will be proposed to the Wake County Public Schools, the community and Wake County Human Resources. For example, church vans, school activity buses, or business vans could be made available as a result of the outreach program. Child care solutions, such as developing structures where rotating groups of parents provide child care in the RTL center using a pre-planned schedule could be organized by the center, or church groups could volunteer during specific parent training sessions.

The Family Connections Center will be located in the main building. Adults who visit the resource room will not be within close proximity to regular education classrooms; they will, however, be directly beside the School Counselor, School Social Worker, School Nurse, and School Psychologist. When parents/guardians enter the room, they will be surrounded by a print rich, bright, and inviting learning environment. The walls will contain examples of visuals utilized in classroom settings, classroom schedules for each grade level, Title1 Reading and Math Home Connection support, *Conscious Discipline* techniques, PBiS expectations matrixes, a large Wheel of Choices (coping skills tool), and various other models that parents can observe and replicate in the home setting. Videos will be available on various topics such as health, curriculum (including actual recorded lessons on specific curriculum), demonstrations of students implementing conflict resolution skills to “use their words” when fixing a problem, and other topics parent/guardians and liaisons request.

The structure of Family Connections Center will be based on a “Sweat Equity” model. The objectives of the center will be posted and reviewed with all participants as we build and strengthen partnerships. As families, parents, and guardians receive support and access services, the expectation will be that they “give back” to the school community a minimum of once a month for a 30 minute period. Examples will be posted and explained (e.g., eating with your child, reading with a lunch bunch group, helping in the media center, communicating with the classroom teacher to arrange a time to volunteer, etc.) Parents/guardians will be able to register to volunteer using one of the Family Connections computers or the computer in the main office. If a parent/guardian does not have security clearance, other ways they can contribute to the school would be identified (e.g., cutting out items, putting materials together, weeding in designated areas around the campus, etc.).

A school-wide teacher-family-student compact would be distributed to all families. The compact would be discussed in detail during a Lincoln Heights family event in order to promote a common goal and buy-in. The compact would state our school’s commitment to a friendly, safe, welcoming, healthy, and inclusive environment. The compact would document a challenge to every student and adult in the Lincoln Heights community to read at least 30 minutes daily and to watch TV and movies and play electronic games selectively.

**Job Description/Desired Outcomes**

Two part-time employees will be hired to work 12 hours per week.

## One liaison will work Tuesdays: 10:00-3:00 (5 hours)

## One liaison will work Thursdays: 2:00-7:00 (5 hours)

## Liaisons will alternate Saturdays: 10:00-1:00 (3 hours)

* Liaisons will alternate one evening per week, depending on identified trainings (3 hours)

## Liaisons will work 4 hours together, engaging in community outreach per week

Four computers will be purchased and networked to enable families to access Wake County Public School resources and Wake County Human Services resources. One printerwill be connected to the computers.

**Goals**

By June 2013, Lincoln Heights’ composite proficiency scores will meet or exceed 70%.

* Liaisons will acquire and establish at least 2-4 parent/guardian partnerships for the 2012-2013 school year.
* Liaisons will actively engage families in assessments, solutions and evaluations of issues that are of importance to families.
* Liaisons will co-facilitate community leadership trainings for community leaders and volunteers.

By June 2013, at least 8 families will benefit from Human Resources services provided by the Family Connections Center.

* Liaisons will provide families with information about available resources.
* Liaisons will help the families navigate technology to access those resources.
* Liaisons will coordinate outreach services (i.e., health, education, family support) for families.

By June 2013, at least 8 families will increase home/school communication.

* Liaisons will actively engage community partners in the sharing of resources to support Family Connections program efforts and strategies.
* Liaisons will collaborate with Wake County Public School departments and Wake County Human Services to organize workshops and trainings, based on identified needs.
* Liaisons will identify potential and existing barriers in the current systems of services and make suggestions for improvement.

**Outcomes**

* Educational success for students and adults - Students with parents who are involved in the Family Connections program will demonstrate at least a 5% improvement in attendance and/or grades by the end of the 2013-2014 school year.
* Increased parent/guardian/family involvement in school events (i.e., Healthy Living events, PTA events, Parent/Teacher conferences, Title 1 events, etc.) – Parents/guardians involved in the Family Connections program will increase participation in school and/or volunteer opportunities by at least 10% by the end of the 2012-2013 school year.
* Healthy children and families – Presentations/educational opportunities that target physical and emotional health will be offered to the school community at least three times during the 2012-2013 school year.
* Community and leadership development – Four community leaders (parents/guardians) will be identified to participate in needs assessment and community outreach by the end of the 2012-2013 school year.

**Evaluation**

**Family Connections Center at Lincoln Heights Evaluation**

Assessment of Efforts and Rating Rubric adapted from

*Parent and Family Involvement Toolkit NCDPI*

**I. Essential Component: Parent/Caregiver Participation**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Guiding Principles** | **Leading**  Comprehensive evidence supports practices are fully implemented, consistently used, and routinely refined to incorporate current best practices. | **Developing**  Evidence supports practices related to this indicator are well-established and routinely used to incorporate best practices. | **Emerging**  Limited evidence supports practices related to this indicator may be initially established or inconsistently used. |
| **1. Improving student achievement** |  |  |  |
| **2. Using various data sources to identify information and learning needs for parents by means of conducting focus groups.** |  |  |  |
| **3.Encouraging parent/caregiver participation in the school environment** |  |  |  |
| **4. Ensuring the physical environment is welcoming to families and the community** |  |  |  |
| **5. Designating space within school for family/ community computer access** |  |  |  |
| **7. Improving student attendance** |  |  |  |

**II. Essential Component: Parent/Caregiver Education**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Guiding Principles** | **Leading**  Comprehensive evidence supports practices are fully implemented, consistently used, and routinely refined to incorporate current best practices. | **Developing**  Evidence supports practices related to this indicator are well-established and routinely used to incorporate best practices. | **Emerging**  Limited evidence supports practices related to this indicator may be initially established or inconsistently used. |
| **1. Facilitating meaningful communication between home and school** |  |  |  |
| **2. Providing information and guidance on curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all content areas** |  |  |  |
| **3. Assisting parents in learning how to create conditions that support learning at home** |  |  |  |
| **4. Demonstrating a value for parenting skills related to health, safety, communication, and academic achievement** |  |  |  |
| **5. Empowering parents to understand their roles in establishing their children’s boundaries, rules, and expectations** |  |  |  |
| **6. Helping parents develop more awareness of the need for literacy and learning in the home** |  |  |  |
| **7. Encouraging Family Literacy by partnering with the Literacy Council of Wake County - ESL** |  |  |  |
| **8. Discussing and monitoring schoolwork and homework** |  |  |  |

**III. Essential Component: Parent/Caregiver Health Services**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Guiding Principles** | **Leading**  Comprehensive evidence supports practices are fully implemented, consistently used, and routinely refined to incorporate current best practices. | **Developing**  Evidence supports practices related to this indicator are well-established and routinely used to incorporate best practices. | **Emerging**  Limited evidence supports practices related to this indicator may be initially established or inconsistently used. |
| **1. Encouraging & promoting a sense of care and concern for physical and emotional safety** |  |  |  |
| **2. Assisting parents in how to help their children learn to ask for help and assistance with matters relating to health, safety, harassment, abuse, and academic assistance** |  |  |  |
| **3. Accessing Human Services Resources (health screenings, immunizations, food stamps)** |  |  |  |

**Additional Action Steps**

* We need a clear, catchy slogan to incorporate the Family Connections Center with Lincoln Heights–such as, “Lincoln Heights is a school conducive to teaching and learning to develop the whole child and support the whole family!”
* Identify a marketing person with WCPSS who could help design a logo for the program. It would be good to have a strong image to use in our newsletters, on our website, and on materials that the parent liaisons will distribute.
* Ensure security policies and systems

**Ideas for Future Development**

* Partnering with Wake Techto enable adults to obtain GEDs
* Partnering with senior citizens groups and start a “Rockin Readers” weekly program
* Hiring a coordinator to facilitate the delivery of health, nutrition, and social services to the school’s students in partnership with a local service provider
* Providing instructionally related activities, such as paying a classroom teacher to be available in the evenings as part of a homework-support program
* Using the schools as a center for community problem solving
* Using volunteers to support young people's academic, interpersonal, and career needs
* Addition of exercise component to student-teacher-family compact

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