

Great Things Are Happening



Parent and community involvement key to success

DPS volunteers assist staff with important tasks

The traditional image of a teacher at the head of the classroom, writing away in a trail of chalk dust has given way to Chromebooks and fancy overhead projectors. While the fundamentals may be the same, 21st century learning truly takes a village. Successful teaching techniques must include parent and volunteer involvement.

"Schools are more than just books. We must find out about a person, their families and care about the community," Dr. Diane Parks-Love, parent consultant, said.



Dr. Parks-Love is the parent consultant at Valerie PreK-6 School. She explains her philosophy as an artist painting a canvas. For her, schools are the palette. Teachers, parents and community volunteers are the painters, sharing their experiences with the students, who are the canvases.

To begin a work of art, one must have a framework from which to work. The Community Education Council is the place to start for every person who wants to volunteer their time. The council is made up of parents and community members who help develop activities and programs within the schools. CEC representatives develop parent involvement plans that address specific needs within each school's population.

"Valerie is a community of learning. I believe we need to work together to make it happen. Parents send their kids to our school, so it's their house. They need to have a say over it," said Parks-Love.

The Ohio Department of Education finds that family involvement "strengthens student learning and improves academic achievement. Students with active support have better attendance, pass more classes and earn more credits resulting in higher grade point averages and higher test scores."



"I can work one-on-one with students who might need a little extra help," Patti Hines, school volunteer said. "The teacher identifies those students who could use that extra help with reading and vocabulary and send them to me."

Hines came to Valerie via her church. She happens to be a retired teacher as well, so she felt volunteering at a school was the perfect fit. Volunteers like Hines work closely with the teachers to help students learn, but there are any number of ways volunteers can assist in a school. They help with book fairs, picture day, open houses and sports, to name just a few. Hines and Parks-Love agree that parents should not be intimidated by the prospect of volunteering.

"We work to find the parent's comfort zone and have them help where they are comfortable," Love said.

"It is not difficult. If you can read, you can help. If you become a mentor to the children, you are helping them," Hines said. "It doesn't take a lot of time. You can set your own hours."

What often results, is a better understanding of how the school works and how the children interact with others during the day.

“You know what’s going on in your child’s classroom. It is easy to misinterpret what your child tells you, but if you are there to see it, you can get a real understanding of where the teacher is coming from,” Teresa Hardy, Valerie PreK-6 parent volunteer.



Hardy volunteers at Valerie every week. One day she might be filling up bags of goodies to hand out for the holidays, while the next popping popcorn for a Friday treat. She also assists with the morning bus arrivals once a month to help students make their way into the building in an orderly fashion.

Parent volunteer, Melissa Pounds, has another theory about parent involvement.

“The kids react to us. They need to see our faces and see us here participating. It shows that we care and want to see the kids succeed,” Pounds said.

There is a Community Education Council at every Dayton Public School. It is made of up several working groups, but parents and volunteers are at the core, working together with school principals to focus on students’ needs. The council usually meets once a month. Prospective volunteers are required to complete a volunteer information form and, in some cases, provide a state identification card. For more information about becoming a volunteer, call your school of choice directly. You can also begin on line at www.dps.k12.oh.com.