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Cincinnati Schools Establishes Programs That Unite Educators And The Community

By Stacy Andell

This summer saw the creation of the Cincinnati Schools ' Parent Leadership Institute. The program

reflects the changing role that parents play in public education. As Vanessa White, the Board President of the Parents for Public Schools (PPS) stated: "The days of bake sales are long gone. Today, parents need a new set of skills and knowledge if they are to realize their full potential to impact student achievement and drive school improvement." Organizations such as PPS work to align the needs of Cincinnati schools with the resources of parents in order for both sides to work together for the benefit of children attending Cincinnati schools.

One of the models that the Cincinnati schools have been looking at is the Pritchard Committee of Lexington, Kentucky. The Pritchard Committee established the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership and trained over 1300 parents from a variety of backgrounds in the ways that they could be productive in assisting the public school system. Cincinnati schools have seen the success of the Lexington program and have worked diligently to see if such a program could have a similar positive effect on parental involvement in Cincinnati schools. Ms. White is eager to see how Cincinnati schools will benefit and expresses high hopes for the program: "Expectations have been raised for students and teachers, and it's time for parents to step up to the plate as well. This program will greatly enhance our ability to identify and develop parent leaders who can then engage other parents to ensure that our schools provide a quality public education for all children."

Other educational professionals in the Cincinnati schools have also welcomes the process and look to the success of the Lexington program to justify their enthusiasm. Superintendent Rosa Blackwell argues that "decades of research confirm that when parents are more involved, student achievement increases." Cincinnati schools stand to benefit from those decades of research in creating a program that clearly aligns the activities of parents and teachers in order to make a Cincinnati public school environment that provides the most comprehensive program for students.

Cincinnati schools are relying on a number of local and national partners to implement the program. In addition to the Pritchard Committee, Cincinnati schools will be working with the United Way and Xavier University. These groups hope to create Community Learning Centers where parents can come for training. Cincinnati schools are grateful for the support from business and other community partners in

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order to fund these Community Learning Centers. Among the grant supporters are the KnowledgeWorks Foundation, the Scripps Howard Foundation and the Kroger Foundation. All of these groups will work in conjunction to make the program as effective as possible for Cincinnati school parents.

To start the program off, a pilot group will begin working under the direction of Zakia McKinney. Ms. McKinney has worked as an Education Director at the Urban League as well as an Executive Director of the Walnut Hills Churches. She has been active in community organizations for many years and looks forward to sharing her experience with Cincinnati schools. She is optimistic of the program's potential for Cincinnati schools, stating that "The Parent Leadership Institute will play an important part by training parents as informed advocates and willing change agents equipped to engage other parents to work with the schools on solutions for change"

Stacy Andell is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and

private K–12 schools. For more information on Cincinnati schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk–12.com/ohio/cincinnati/index.html>

Orlando Schools Aim To Improve Language Program

By Stacy Andell

Orlando Schools Administrators Visit China

Several Orlando School administrators will be among the nearly four hundred curriculum developers and administrators from around the nation to visit China in an effort to create and expand educational programs that teach Chinese language and culture in America. The trip to China will last one week from June 27 through July 5. The trip is in cooperation with Hanban, China's Office of Chinese Language Council International, in partnership with the College Board, the Chinese Language Association of Secondary–Elementary Schools (CLASS), and the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL). The visit will focus on the incentives and strategies that educators can take back to their own schools and use to support the growth of Chinese programs. Currently there are only about 24,000 students in the US studying Chinese compared with close to 150 million Chinese students studying English. During the trip, educators will have an opportunity to meet with Chinese education leaders, build sister school and city ties, and network with other U.S. school leaders who are bringing Chinese language programs to their districts and schools. Orlando Schools want to ensure they are prepared for the new opportunities to offer more language education at younger grades.

In surveys conducted in the Orlando Schools concerning Advanced Placement courses several high schools expressed an interest in offering an AP Chinese course for the 2006–2007 school year. The problem was that many of these schools do not have a teacher of Chinese nor do they see a way to fund such a program. But that may be changing thanks to new programs that unite the governments and educators of China and the US. In April 2006, the College Board and Hanban announced the

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formation of a partnership to build and expand Chinese language programs in U.S. schools. The partnership features other programs especially intended to help educators who would like to create or grow a Chinese language and culture program in their schools or districts. Because of this program plans have been made to allow 250 guest teachers from China to work in schools in the United States. Also some American teachers will begin training at Beijing Normal University and Shanghai International Studies University. The first sessions begin this summer with sixty teachers from across the nation attending special intensive courses to gain state certification to teach Chinese classes for the new school year.

Orlando Schools Recruit teachers from Puerto Rico

Orlando Schools have hired over sixty new teachers from Puerto Rico during a two-day hiring fair held in Puerto Rico. The aim was to hire veteran certified teachers with special skills in teaching Gifted programs and Limited English Proficiency students. Mathematics and Science teachers were also recruited due to the shortage of math and science teachers in some Orlando schools. Orlando Schools will be hiring 2,400 new teachers for the 2006–2007 school and be opening nine new schools. Many teachers from Puerto Rico are attracted to the Orlando Schools because of the constancy that working in a strong educational environment can provide, the lifestyle that living in the Orlando area offers and the closeness of Orlando to Puerto Rico.

Stacy Andell is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in-depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. Stacy has a nose for research and writes stimulating news and views on school issues. For more on Orlando schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk-12.com/Florida/Orlando/index.html>



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