

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** I want to welcome everyone today to our LEA to LEA webinar, Welcoming All Families into the School Community. Today is November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012. And we will have a special guest with us today. Our LEA is DeeAnn Graham, a principal, and you'll hear more about her in a moment.

I'm excited about today's topic. Today's topic is going to help us understand that in order for parents to want to participate, they have to have a welcoming community to come to. This session is being recorded today and will be available on our website.

Here you have before you the PaTTAN web -- the PaTTAN mission statement, which supports the efforts and initiatives of the Bureau of Special Education and LEAs, local education agencies. PaTTAN's purpose is to build capacity of the local education agencies to serve students who receive special education services. The intent of today's webinar is to share information with local educational agencies regarding what Pennsylvania leaders are doing to recognize the need of welcoming all students into their school community.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has a commitment to the least restrictive environment, meaning that we as PaTTAN people are committed to assisting educators and building environments that include those with disabilities. A welcoming environment will encourage a respectful environment for all learners in the school.

Although this particular handout would be too small print for you to be able to read, it is a copy of our flyer on the LEA to LEA webinar series that we're using for this year. This is the second in our series. Our first one was in September, Talking to LEAs about Supporting Student Success, and was recorded and will be located on our website. Today, we'll be doing Welcoming Families into the School Community for an hour. And then our next one will be January 14<sup>th</sup>, about communicating effectively with families.

Our objectives today is to really define what a family friendly atmosphere is by looking at the outside and inside environment of our schools, to look at the issue of accessibility from the family perspective. How accessible are our school grounds, our buildings to our senior citizens, to our community? To look at those kinds of issues and discuss what families will see in mutually respectful relationships within the school. What is the tone that we hear and we see around our relationships with schools? And then the last area that we'll look at is viewing at options for meaningful involvement for parents. So we'll take a look at these objectives today in the short time that we have together.

The Pennsylvania -- the PTA standards are standards that we have accepted in Pennsylvania. There are six standards. And the first standard is welcoming all families into the school community. Families are active participants in the life of the school, feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

So since this is the first standard, we wanted to start with an LEA that was showing this in a very exemplary way. The research behind this comes from a synthesis of findings from Henderson and Mapp, where they have looked at over 50 different studies about the impact of family and community involvement with schools. And the key findings that you see here about that when parents are engaged, it strengthens the student success. When families feel valued and welcome, they get involved. Schools need to recognize and affirm and support different forms of involvement. And strong, mutually respectful relationship building will produce positive outcomes.

In special education, we do have the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, public law 108446. It requires improving results for students with disabilities. In the state of Pennsylvania, we have a state performance plan, and there are several indicators. Indicator eight requires schools to facilitate parent involvement. So we're connecting to the law today as well about what does a welcoming environment do to facilitate parent involvement?

I'd like to introduce our guest, our special guest today. You see a picture of her on the screen here. This is DeeAnn Graham. She's a principal for Seneca Valley School District in western PA. And her school, Connoquenessing Valley Elementary, is located -- watch the red star. There you go. It's just along the Route 79 corridor in western Pennsylvania. So that gives you a general location of where she's located today. She's at her school building, speaking to us from that site. And I'm speaking to you from Pittsburgh, just below that red star, so we are truly a technology group today. DeeAnn, why don't you talk to us about the demographics of your school a little bit?

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** Okay, thank you, Donna. I am very excited to be a part of this conversation today. Parent involvement holds a special place in my heart. A little bit about our school, Connoquenessing Valley, or CVE for short, is a part of the Seneca Valley School District. And again, we're about 45 minutes north of Pittsburgh, and we have 735 students in grades K-4. We have 62 faculty and support staff, some of the support staff being itinerant, so they're supporting one of the other three elementary schools in the district.

But we do provide support services, many. They range in support from -- we do have our learning support, which is offered in both an inclusion setting and a pull-out for K-4 students. We have a language support classroom, two of them, that are pull-out programs. We offer itinerant autistic and emotional support for our students, as well as intervention supports with Title I reading and our YES process.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Thank you. We're going to be looking at our modules that we have a training for PaTTAN. A few years ago, we have developed a training module for each of these six PTA standards. And the first module, Welcoming All Families into the School Community, talks about four major areas that we just saw that research mentions. You need to have a family friendly atmosphere, accessibility, mutual respectful relations, and options for meaningful involvement.

So today, in talking with DeeAnn and sharing this information with you, we're going to be looking at these issues. And first of all, we want to mention that we need to set the tone in our school. And if you notice up in the upper right-hand corner, we have a child-sized chair. What does this set the tone for when a family member walks in and is too large for that child chair? So we need to think about a simple thing like furniture, and having chairs that are available for adults to sit in too.

Think about the etiquette that you use in your home. What about providing name tags for people with their name and position? Especially some of our meetings we have in special education, many people there, and it's so confusing when there's so many people sitting there to remember who their name is and what the position is. Make sure you do introduce everyone, have an agenda and a time frame.

And understand that sometimes parents become emotional, so, you know, have the tissues handy and readily available for those times when you might need them. Make sure you provide copies of things, and make sure that you follow up a few days after the meeting with a call. These are all recommendations from research that makes a much more family friendly meeting.

We need to say -- you know, take a look at our buildings and say, do they say welcoming? If I was a consultant coming to your building and I was asked to do a training, and I have your handouts and I have equipment that I'm bringing to the building, and this is the door you direct me to, by the time I get to the top of the stairs, I would question how welcoming it would be.

Or if you look at the lobby here, where you would see that there's dirt located on the floor and a parent is bringing a child in through this door and they see all this dirt in the lobby area, what does that

say about how you value their child and them coming into our school building? Or what if the door is broken and rotting away? What does that say to people when they're coming to visit your building?

So if you don't have access to your sports games or to the auditorium for those that are on wheelchair, then you don't have access for all of the community and everyone to be able to come in. So these are some of the things we need to look at when we're talking about welcoming all families into our schools. We need to be able to set the tone of our environment.

So we need to look at considerations we have of clearly marked access to our school main entrance, and commons places that are cleaner and uncluttered visually and attractive. And that school signs are written in the languages spoken by the community. So we need to look at these kinds of issues and be concerned about them.

So what I'd like to do now is give you a poll and find out just how those of you who are attending today -- we have approximately 26 people online right now. And I'm going to launch a poll about how does your school identify and address accessibility barriers to school events. So let me launch this poll.

Okay. Nope. Okay, we have 46% of you have -- about half of you have voted. Oh, and the poll's closed. Okay, so we have 46% surveyed the home on perceived barriers. And 15% use other locations to hold meetings. That's great. You know, a lot of times we don't think about holding meetings at the YMCA or McDonald's or some other location than the school building. And 38% of you are providing services in the evening or on the weekends, so that is just wonderful.

Okay. Because that is -- that is just wonderful for the group of you that are sharing that information. Let's hear about -- I made one visit one day to Seneca Valley and I came to DeeAnn's school. I was an invited guest as part of a training program that was going to occur there. And I was overwhelmed by the welcoming that was received. I visit a lot of schools in Pennsylvania, and DeeAnn, your school really stands out as a different place to be, so I'm so glad you're here for us today. Why don't you talk to us first about your introduction to this school, and talk a little bit about the welcoming?

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** Okay, thank you. You are always so kind. What you see on your screen is a picture from the street of CVE. And you know, this is my sixth year as principal at the school, and 16<sup>th</sup> year in the district. So just to give you a little bit of background, when I started here as a kindergarten teacher, you know, I just always felt like it was a special place to be. And when they provided me with the opportunity to lead this lovely building, I wanted to focus on the community at large.

We're a neighborhood school. You can see there's a park adjacent to us. But we also have -- many of our -- the majority of our student population is bussed in from the northern farming communities. And also to the south, we have very busy Cranberry Township. So it was really important to me to really take that first visual of this is CVE, and make sure that we have it, you know, warm and welcoming.

So we took extra efforts with our sign. And even if you look at the doorway, just putting seasonal ferns or flowers. It's not that expensive, and sometimes I get donations for that. So it's just an important part of the first visual of this school.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Yes, it is.

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** This part is as you drive in past the sign. You know, just as a visitor, and I'm sure you can all feel the same way, when you're visiting other schools, where do you go? Which direction do you turn, and how do you find a parking space? There are two entrances to our building that you can see from the street, so we felt that it was important to guide our visitors to the right area, the closest parking lot. So our teachers leave that lot for any visitor so it's accessible and a quick walk into the building.

I have added some pictures to show that we have -- this is either at arrival or dismissal. And we have the support of many paraprofessionals and teachers outside at both entrances to welcome the kiddos, those that are walking or getting off the bus. And then to the far right, you see a staff member at a table. Those are the main entrance doors that are open for a short period of time during arrival and dismissal. And then at 8:40 in the morning, they are shut and locked. So we do have a captured entrance.

This is the other entrance to our building, just showing that they -- again, even though it's a second entrance and one that is accessible with a ramp, as well as steps, we try to make sure that that one is as beautiful as the other. And so when you walk in that lobby, attention is paid to those areas as well. That's the -- those are the doors that are used for any evening programs, as well as our gym is there, so visitors that are borrowing the gym have the opportunity to see what CVE is all about. And it's as welcoming as the front doors.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Yes, it really is. You've really set the tone out there, DeeAnn. I really appreciated knowing exactly where to park and exactly what door to walk into. So you definitely have

clearly marked access to the school. And now let's talk about your common spaces that are cleared, uncluttered, and visually attractive.

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** Okay, this, coming back to that main entrance, once we have the students in the building and it becomes a more secure building, we needed the directions for parents as soon as they opened the door. Because that is -- the captured entrance is locked inside, but parents can come into our entryway and we have our mission statement visible. And then to the right, we're just reminding parents, you know, you must stop there and turn to go into the office.

Just kind of taking you though, once they enter the office, our secretaries, they are just wonderful. They are -- we have -- every visitor to the building stops in the captured -- the secure office and shows ID, and gets a visitor's badge that they are printed right there. And while they're waiting for the staff member to print that out, behind them, you can see the bulletin board where we try to -- our teacher makes that thematic and shows what's happening in our building that month. And it's just a nice way for them to see again some of the activities that we have taking place in the school.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Yes, and the other thing I wanted to mention, DeeAnn, that's so spectacular is that when I came to the building, I was being buzzed in as soon as I opened that outside door. The staff was being attentive. And they immediately stopped whatever they were doing. They were right at the desk to greet me. And that really sends a message of welcoming as well, which I've really appreciated. So giving that visitor that attention and not wait a minute or whatever. Just to be real there -- it was really different. So I want to thank your staff for that.

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** Thank you. They do make a concerted effort from our paraprofessionals, our crossing guard, the secretaries, our bus drivers. We all want that feeling whenever -- whether it's students or, you know, the parents or grandparents coming onto our building, to feel you're welcome here. That's just a picture of our front door that's going into the office.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Yes, and the thing is too that you have this kind of calligraphy and words of welcome everywhere in your building. You have it above different doorways and it's just a really nice way of saying some very nice things in your school to set, again, the tone and the climate of your school. So I have never been to a front door that had calligraphy written on it.

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** Thank you. What you're seeing here are pictures as some visitor would be buzzed into our main lobby. There is an expansive area that we have set up. I can't -- I don't have a visual that shows you all of the separate seating areas, but we wanted to provide a place where people could sit

while they're waiting for their appointment, their schedule appointment. We do have books available that are thematic and are built around our monthly positive behavior themes, our Olweus themes for the month. So they're changed out.

And a lot of parents who come with their small children enjoy those areas. And the television screen shows our morning announcements, which when the children are bringing down attendance, they just love those clues and the special things happening. But it rotates, the messages, all day long. So if a parent is waiting for an appointment or a class meeting, they may be able to see what's happening not only at CVE, but in the district.

This area, I have to say, you know, a lot of things in education we borrow from each other. And this was one of those cases. I had the opportunity to visit another building, and I noticed these blue triangular signs. And they were so helpful to me as a visitor in that building that I approached our district building and grounds director and, you know, asked him if he had heard of these triangular signs. And he had. He worked with me to use some of our funding in my building budget.

I felt that it was very important. I think that clear signs are not only helpful for the students' safety, but for every activity that we've had since we put these signs in, whether it's an art show or meet the teacher night, just the daily IEP meetings or such, parents quite easily can look up and find their location of, where is it that I need to be? Is it room nine or the nurse's office? I've been very pleased with those, the signs.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Yes, I was also very enthralled to see those signs that made them easy. But I also want to mention that when I was there visiting and I talked to someone in your building, whether it be the front office staff or a teacher there, that when I asked for a location to go to, that I was not just pointed to that direction, but I was actually escorted, which again showed a special touch. It wasn't just pointing to the sign down the end of the hallway, but it was walking me out of one room, down a hallway, and escorting me actually there, and then asking me if I could find my way back. So those are, again, just the extra touches that you just don't see everywhere, DeeAnn, that is evident in your building when you're there.

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** Thank you.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** You are quite welcome. Well, we have another poll here that we would like to do. We'll take a look at the next poll. And we want to know from you, how does your school recognize a family friendly atmosphere? And so if you would now vote for one of the four ways visually appearing:

holding family friendly meetings, or building respect and trust among staff, or friendly exterior and interior signs. So if you would just go ahead and vote. We've got about 39% have voted, 42, 46, 50%. Thank you for voting, that's great. 58%. Thank you so much. 63% of you have voted, very good. Thank you.

So we have 38% have said that it's a visually appealing interior environment. 25% hold family friendly meetings. 31% build respect and trust between staff, and 6% have friendly exterior and interior signs. So thank you for taking that poll.

All right, so what we want to do next is go on to the next -- oops, sorry about that. Go onto the next slide. And we want to talk about welcoming families as into mutually respectful relationships. I've already started to address how that is occurring in DeeAnn's building as you were there. But there are a few other ways that we want to mention, what we've seen here. And the research says if you convey a general regard and respect, convey empathy and warmth, if you talk with people, not at people, and use active listening skills, that those are all setting the tone.

And if you spend any five minutes with DeeAnn, you would know that she does speak to all of these things. She gives you her full attention by looking at you when you're talking to her. She is all present with you, as we know from Steven Covey when he talks about be present, and she is with you. And I know she's blushing and guffawing in the background there, but it is true. And it really comes through. And I think it also reflects so well with her staff.

One of the things that she has done is she is so -- uses hospitality in her school. Here she has some cider available for staff. She does it attractively in a display. She gives the emphasis of, how can I serve you? When I was there, she had her district do a little fruit cup in the cafeteria, and it was attractively done and served. We had cold ice water provided to us in that. Those little touches, DeeAnn, are just attention to detail, having coffee and tea and what you can do to make me feel welcome was just speaking volumes to how you respect and care for visitors. DeeAnn, how do you do that, or why do you do it?

I have to say that it's just when I was growing up, I was taught the golden rule, that you treat others the way that you would want to be treated. And from the time that I started in the classroom as a classroom teacher, I noticed that my students responded if they felt safe and welcomed and valued and respected. I was able to focus more on the academics because we set that stage right away that it's okay

to ask questions, it's okay -- you know, I see you, I see everything from -- the responsive classroom was a big piece that I used as a teacher.

But when I look at my staff, they are an extension of what I believe to be very important in our daily life. We're very busy in schools. Everybody's stretched so thin. So if I can do something little, the cider, that's the best crock pot I had, but the cider was for just something warm. And I sent out an email, we had parent-teacher conferences on Friday, so I said, stop by the office, teachers, and have some warm cider and kind words. And just the conversations that they would have with each other around that little bit of warm cider was worth every second of running to the grocery store and grabbing it. So I feel that it's very important that we take time as principals and any administrator to recognize that it's the little things that really make a difference.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** That's true. And look at this, talk to us about this.

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** This was -- I have this thing about fluorescent lights. What I did was we have a little, small area, it's as big as that picture shows, where our faculty mailboxes are. And I noticed that oftentimes, teachers would pull things out and they didn't have any place to sit down. And we have a binder there that's communication with our central maintenance, our cleaning -- nighttime cleaning crew, and some recycling bins.

So what I did was I just brought -- these were wicker furniture from home. Tried to make it a little bit like a soft landing for them. And our sign-in sheet is right near there, so you know, every once in a while, I'll put a jar of some type of sweet treat out. It's just random. And you know, if I can't, at least they have the visual of knowing that I am thinking of their comfort when they come in.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Yeah, and you know what? I just was so impressed that you did such a nice, welcoming area by their mailboxes there, and had a place for them to sit if they wanted to and work, and how welcoming it was for the staff. And so you are such a wonderful model for your staff, what you expect from them in the classroom. So thank you for that.

And so we want to take a look at the next portion here is, what are meaningful options for parent involvement? And I think our participants today will be surprised at some of the ideas that you used for meaningful involvement based on parent input.

So first of all, accessibility means supporting the parents who may not be able to access the school through traditional means. We need to rethink a little bit how we're providing access for all

people. And we can look to universal design for doing that. We can look at what kinds of supports and accommodations that we can make for people.

So for instance, if we have parents that are always working all day long, as the audience has said, many of you are now having meetings outside of the school building, in the evenings, or weekends. And how do we provide individual and personalized assistance? What about those students who can't afford a book at the book fair? Is there a fund or a way that we can make sure that they can participate in the book fair as well?

So you know, it's looking at accessibility for all of these different avenues for our students in our school. We know that when parents volunteer, that we have involved parents. And so all involved parents will help our students be more successful in school.

But what we might not understand or realize is that that volunteering may look different than what it has been in the past. In the past, we might have thought of volunteering as you help with the classroom party or you help with the fundraiser, then you've done volunteering. We need to move away from just low impact on student learning and look at our new thinking for volunteering opportunities. And this really comes from our PTA standards, anyone who supports learning, not just in the school building or during the school day.

And what tasks do we have that will have a high impact on student learning? For instance, what do the parents want to do to volunteer in our school? It may not be the same vision that we have for their school. So again, DeeAnn is going to give us some very interesting ways that her parents are involved in her school. So DeeAnn, talk to us.

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** Okay, I agree with you in that we do have to think differently about parent volunteers. And again, coming back to just what is on everybody's plates. And so our parents are most -- the majority of them are both working. And you know, they want to help and be involved, but how do we find out what areas they can help us with?

So you know, one of the things that we did was survey our parents to see, you know, what their talents are and how they would like to share them. And we also, not only through electronic surveys that you can send out in your school emails, but you can, you know, just in presenting to your PTO or PTA organization and seeing -- just brainstorming some ideas. What are the timeframes? If they're working parents, can they come in after school? Or can they do something at home in their free time once the kiddos are in bed?

What you see -- what I tried to do was pool a couple of the projects that we have that are a little bit unique. And one of them dealt with a parent that was a member of the county master gardening association. And I'm not -- I do not have a green thumb, so I had no connection to this. It was just a casual conversation. And then she went out and spoke to her other fellow master gardeners. And from that point on, this is our third year working with them.

They come in during the summer, when the building is actually closed except for, you know, the skeleton staff. And they'll plant bulbs, they'll work on the signs. They come in the spring when we're ready for fresh flowers. And they also -- you know, they bring things from their own garden for the children to experience, so vegetables and such. So that has been a very -- that has been a wonderful connection. So that's just a picture of some of the things that they have been working on. And you'll see that, I think, in every picture of our outdoor spaces, a master gardener's touches.

These are some pictures from our family night activities. What we tried to do is at least once a semester, if not more, it just depends on what everybody's schedules are, is we try to schedule an opportunity where we're inviting families to come into the building at night. And we always tie this in at some fun activities, such as the art with the pumpkins. Or the physical space that you see with the movement with some math, or in one area, the pumpkin decorating was -- we do this every year. So we had the families decorating pumpkins. They bring them themselves, and we just put out some materials for them to decorate. And they decorate our halls for the next week.

But they also had an opportunity to go into our library and our outdoor classroom to listen to stories. And the teachers volunteer to read during the evenings, which is lovely. The one in the lower portion of this frame is our art teacher had a connection with a visiting art gallery that was traveling from school to school, made arrangements for them to come. And what we did was we had the children in the school, our fourth graders, as the dulcets. So they each had a painting that they researched and were able to share with all of the adults that were visiting. It's just a wonderful opportunity to get families, grandparents, and such to bring the children into the school.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** One of the things that I'm sure our audience would want to know, DeeAnn, is I heard you say that your staff volunteers their time. How do you get staff to volunteer their time?

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** That's -- this is -- that's a difficult thing now to do. But it can happen. I really have to say that each year, it just depends on, you know, being respectful of what someone's schedule is. And I don't have any expectation that everybody can do everything each time it's put out there. but if

someone is able to stay and help us, whether it's briefly set up the tables to prepare for the pumpkins, or you know, come with their children and participate in the phys ed night, that's all appreciated.

And I try to be very -- you know, I thank them personally for coming. And you know, I try to put it out there that, you know, if there's something they need, a doctor's appointment or something with their child, that I show some flexibility and respect for their time when they're able to give it.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Okay, thank you. Talk to us about some special projects here with your PTO.

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** Okay. We are very fortunate in that our PTO is very supportive. And they help fund many projects. And our -- this is just a beautiful picture of our garden, but the main thing that I wanted to say during this portion is just to state that we are looking for more than just our parent-teachers and the fundraising. You know, they are providing a lot of input for ideas for the school.

And one of the ways that we've been able to help bring our PTO members into the school is through our garden. And again, that's -- some parents come at night, some come during the day. You know, they're weeding, they're out there working. But they also come into our cafeteria. We have our own staff that is helping the kiddos with their milk or opening containers and such. But we instituted a new -- or implemented a new program where our parent-teacher volunteers sign up for a day to help in the cafeteria. So we may have three parents scheduled for the first Tuesday of every month.

And they come in, they sign in in the office, put [inaudible]. We have little aprons. And they're there in the cafeteria, enjoying helping the children. They not only open milk or such, but they are providing positive reinforcements for the students that are taught, you know, making those good kind of choices. And those are things that we have done with them in the training.

Here are some more parents. And the kiddos, this is a beautiful thing. The children, we have a cleanup night every fall before school starts. And it's a way for -- yes, we do get a lot of support with cutting grass and such, but the best thing is to watch the ownership that the students feel in the fall and in the spring. This is their school, and they're proud to help keep it a beautiful place to learn.

These -- this is another opportunity that has been wonderful, and that's our scouts. If you look at your community and get connected with some of the scouting organizations, we have been so fortunate that we have had several eagle scout projects. So these are young men in the community that are working towards their eagle scout rank, and they're always looking for community service activities.

And one of them, we had an outdoor -- two outdoor classrooms with the pergola you see. One student came and put in the benches, he and his family. And then another student came and wanted to provide some shade for that, and that was two years later. So he and his father, they purchased their own materials, they get those donations.

And then the other outdoor classroom, these stumps you see, that was a beautiful addition that it was just a blank, plain area. And the vision that a scout had, coming in and using a natural resource, the children love to sit on those logs. They love it.

The other one is -- this is actually a former CVE student. He came back to us and wanted to do something for the garden that he enjoyed all those years. And he built -- he fixed a retaining wall that would have cost so much money, through donations. So the eagle scouts are an amazing, amazing resource.

We -- this year, we did want to really recognize those little young scouts. And so what we did was I put out a special day for scout recognition, just like our -- some of our -- well, we call it midget football, but some of our young football, youth football teams. You know, they'll wear their uniforms. We thought, we're going to have a scout day. So we recognized all of the students that are in the building that are a part of our scouts. And their faces really say it all, sweetie pies.

This -- we are always looking for grant writing opportunities. And I had a parent who helped, with a group of teachers, secure a Highmark grant. And this was about \$10,000 they gave. And not only did we work with the physical fitness equipment you saw previously, but this is winter gardens. And our first graders had an opportunity to taste all types of yummy things like kohlrabi and experience foods that we really may not -- they may not have an opportunity to do. But they really do enjoy the winter gardens. That's been a nice healthy foods option.

And finally, this slide I included just to share with you. As this group -- this meant so much to me last year. Our fourth graders, the activity was created by them to give back to the community. And this was the first group that came through as kindergarten students during my first year. So they, for year after year, heard the message from all of our staff to be safe, be kind, be responsible, be caring to each other.

And they wanted to give back to their community, and it meant so much to me to see that. They established the fundraising activity. They worked with their fourth grade teachers to make it a learning activity. And they sold spirit bracelets one month, you know, something -- I forget the other thing. Each

month, they raised money. And then they chose where it would go. And once they chose a portion to our local community park that they enjoy going to, and to the local library buying books. It was just -- it really meant a lot to me that they would take what we do every day and then internalize that and give back. So that was a nice thing to see, full circle.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Well, I think we've really seen, DeeAnn, how you model this over and over and over again from the time that you were a classroom teacher to being a principal in the building. You've really helped us look at the fact that meaningful options do not always mean workshops for parents. So I listed some of the titles and things that you showed us here that are really stepping outside of the box. And did I hear you correctly that what you do is you survey the family, but sometimes it's just the conversations that you have that you find out some of these links?

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** Yes. And those conversations can happen at the end of the day when parents are signing out, you know, for special pickups. You just make yourself available and just start talking to the parents, and they'll share these little ideas and tidbits. And you think, that sounds like a good idea, or I have to remember that that person works for Westinghouse. Maybe we could get some engineers in. You know, it's just always listening to -- and any opportunity that you have to speak to parents and grandparents.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Okay. In a minute, I'm going to ask you a question about your attendance at your PTO meetings, but I want to -- I want to remind participants that you can go to the question box. And if you have a specific question for DeeAnn that you would like to ask at this time, you can go ahead and type it into the question box, and I can view that and relay that on to her.

DeeAnn, while our participants are thinking about questions they might have, my question to you is, you do all of these things to be welcoming, so how is this influencing your attendance at PTO meetings or other school meaningful workshops that you feel you need to have?

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** I see this as a crucial piece to communicating what we're doing in the classroom, the academic portion. We have a beautiful turnout for our family night activities. And our conversations in the community that are super attended has monthly conversations in the community as well. So as a district, our focus is that we're transparent. Come ask us, come talk to us.

And so we do have a very nice turnout at our PTO meetings. We have -- but I see that that's -- you know, you try to offer those in the daytime as well as at night so you can, you know, get the parents

that are working as well. As a working parent, I appreciated that opportunity to come in the evening. So we do have a great deal of response.

One piece that I find really helpful, the electronic communication has really increased our ability to get the message out or get information back. So you know, for example, if we're planning an activity or rolling out a focus on reading strategies we want parents to come and talk to us about or learn more about, we -- when I send out an electronic email, I'm sending it to over 840 email addresses. Our website, the PTO has a link off of our website. So we do have a great turnout with information when we need it or when we want to get more feedback.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** Thank you. I really see that you really focus on finding out what families value, and incorporating that into your school. So I can see why people would want to then come up and participate in other projects that you have, or other messages you want. And sometimes when we say we have a workshop, it's not exactly what parents wanted to come up for. So if those are our only options, we might not have participation in that regard.

I haven't seen any questions that anyone has listed. I'm just going to check our chat box in case people put anything there. I don't see anything there as well. I'm going to launch then another poll for our participants. Let's see here, we have a final poll here on, how does your school provide options for family involvement that contribute to student success?

Is it by connecting families like in the -- do you connect families in the same classroom, the same culture, of disabilities? What do you do to connect families with each other? Do you have a continuum of options to volunteer, like from home and evening and weekend and in school so that parents can check off how they will be volunteering? And so families understand how to help their child academically? And are you doing some of the things that DeeAnn mentioned through electronic? Are you holding a GoTo meeting in the evening, or homework hotlines that they can call in while they're doing the hotline? Is there a website that directs them on how they can attend?

So if you would go ahead and select your answers on what you're doing out there, we have about 20%. Thank you for doing it so quickly. On how you're finding options for family involvement. We have about 41% that have voted. And 48% voted. And we seem to be -- oh, 52% voted. Okay, that's probably about it for the group we have.

So that means 43% have connected with families, 14% have a continuum of options, and 43% are actually helping families electronically by how to help their child academically. So that's just wonderful.

Well, I want to thank everyone for participating today. There was a question about how we can get copies of the PowerPoint. We will be saving today's presentation and putting it on the PaTTAN website, so we will have that online. We didn't think the pictures without today -- without hearing DeeAnn's explanation would really benefit, and that's why we didn't have them up here early. DeeAnn, we have a final picture here. And why did you bring us this picture of all?

**DEEANN GRAHAM:** Aw, I couldn't resist it. Actually, this is just a picture of -- we really do value each member of the CVE family. And I just wanted to encourage all LEAs to look at all members. Our bus drivers, that door to door service that we provide, keeping kiddos safe and having a good start to their day or a good end to their day, you know, reach out to the bus drivers. They have great ideas about a peaceful school bus. But I just couldn't resist those babies. Look at how cute they are.

**DONNAIRENE MCKINLEY:** They are. Well, we are so grateful for your participation today. You've shown us about a caring environment. You've really showed us, and I hope people have heard in the tone of your voice even, the nurturing relationships that you have with parents and staff so that parents want to come and help.

I had said to you that day how outstanding your school facility was, your demeanor was, and that I had something in mind for you in the future. And I'm so glad that when I approached you recently to participate in today's webinar that you were willing to take the pictures and to do this. I know that you are very busy, and doing these webinars can be nerve-wracking. And you've been a real trouper for us. And we certainly thank you for that.

Our next webinar for our participants will be January 14<sup>th</sup> in the year 2013. And at that time, we'll have an LEA to LEA conversation about communicating effectively with our home community. So we thank you all for participating today, and I will be ending the webinar a few minutes early. Thank you all for participating and being part of today's webinar.