

KIMBERLY JENKINS: Hello, my name is Kim Jenkins. I'm a PaTTAN consultant in the King of Prussia office. Today, we are presenting the last webinar in the LEA to LEA webinar series. Handouts for the sessions are available on the PaTTAN website. You can find the handouts by going to the training calendar, selecting today's event, and locate the handouts on the right hand side of the screen.

We also welcome any of you to ask any questions you may have for our team by using the question box on the right hand side of your screen. Today's presentation will be provided by the Discovery Charter School in Philadelphia, and is titled Discovery Charter School's Journey Through Meaningful Parent Engagement through the Energy Bus. Discovery Charter School is currently a team participating in this year's Enhancing Parent Engagement training series.

Their team is here today to share information about their school. Today's presenters include Amanda Bouwman, special education teacher; Renee Brown, parent and home-school president; and Pam Evans, school and community coordinator.

On this slide, you can see PaTTAN's mission statement. Here you see a copy of our flyer announcing this training series. Today's webinar is the fourth webinar in the series. This session is also being recorded and will be available, as the other webinars in this series are, on the PaTTAN website. At this time, I will turn the presentation over to Pam Evans.

PAM EVANS: Hello, everyone. Thank you for joining us. We're going to talk a little bit about the energy bus. As you saw on the first slide, we talked about the energy bus. What it is, we adapted this concept from the book called The Energy Bus, written by John Gordon. And what it talks about is a lot of positive energy, how to get people engaged, keep people what we call on the bus.

So we use this as a bus throughout our school all the way across from students to staff to parents to community leaders. Everyone knows about our energy bus. So as we go along, you'll hear a lot about the energy bus. Definitely if you have any questions when we're done, feel free to type them in and we would love to answer them for you.

Right now, I'm going to introduce you to one of our team members, who is Miss Amanda Bouwman. She's a special education teacher at our school, and she's going to be talking about helping parents embrace a different route, which of course is special education. So right now, our bus is taking a journey down sped way. And here is Miss Bouwman.

AMANDA BOUWMAN: So one of the biggest hurdles that we find in special education is getting parents to meetings. So what we try to do as a special education team, we definitely use the phone, we use

email, we use text messaging. We also use in person when the kid is being picked up, or siblings being picked up or dropped off from school. We also send mail home, and then sometimes we send things home with the student for the parent to look at and get back to us.

We also try to get the parents on board early. We've found that middle school is the hardest time to get the parents to come to meetings and to follow up with us. So our students who get identified in kindergarten and first grade, we definitely try to get those parents on board right away and being aware of what is expected of them, and that they'll have continuous communication with the special education team while their student is eligible.

And then our last resort, if we can't get the parent in any of those ways, is to do a home visit, which we don't usually need to do. But we do have people who are able to do that and go out to the home if needed.

We also as a team try to communicate as often as we can with our case managers, so -- I mean with the parents so that we aren't only communicating every year at the IEP meeting or at evaluations. But we're constantly talking to them throughout the year at back to school night, at report card conferences, making phone calls, making -- sending emails just so the parents feel connected and know that they're a part of the process, a part of the team.

We also -- our psychologist also reach out to the families for reevaluations or for the evaluation process. And one thing we've used that has helped parents feel more part of the special ed process and feel better about when their students do become a special education student is providing inclusive services as much as possible.

Often with evaluations, when I get to the end, I feel like the parents are very nervous that this means their student will now be in a different classroom or will be totally separate from the rest of the class and the school. And they're very reassured when they realize that their student will still be in the regular classroom as much as possible. So we really as a school strive for inclusion.

And to do this, we have a case manager for every grade, or for every two grades for some of the lower grades. And that teacher supports in the classroom with co-teaching and also does some small group and pullout resource support.

Another initiative we have is we -- every year, we have a student support social, where we invite all the parents who have students with IEPs out to the school. And it's a team -- it's to meet the team,

meet our speech and language pathologist, our occupational therapist, our hearing therapist, all of our special education teachers, and our behavior support.

And we try to get the parents out to this by having child care. We provide dinner and then we have a raffle to ShopRite or to Target, which are nearby stores by our school. And we also have -- had a couple classes and sessions related to behavior issues especially. But this is definitely something we want to increase to be able to possibly send parents to the PaTTAN conference, which some members of our special ed team were just able to go to. But we'd like to invite some of our parents to do that next year as well.

And we would also like to increase parent participation in the IEP process. Although we usually can get the parent to come to the meeting, we would like them to be a more active participant and know more about the process and feel empowered to make their recommendation and say what they would like to see. So we'd like to provide resources. We'd also like to talk more with the parent before they come in about what we'll be going over and who will be at the meeting so when they come, they feel more a part of the meeting and they're ready for what's to come.

So I'll now be turning the mic over to Miss Renee Brown, who is a parent in our school and also the president of the home and school association.

RENEE BROWN: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Renee Brown. I'm the home and school president. I have four children that attend Discovery Charter School, and I also had the pleasure of sitting on the board of Discovery Charter School that helps run and oversees Discovery Charter School. And that's just such a great, great pleasure.

Parents drive. We have to understand that we drive. We are parents, have power. Power equals parent. Our students are the best. And we have to understand, no matter whether you have an IEP, gifted EP, regular, parents are power, and schools need students -- and we have the powers, so we have to make sure that we do everything we can to get everything going.

Going to jump right in into what we say is parent engagement. We might be getting ready to play a clip for you about what the parents say.

[VIDEO BEGINS]

WOMAN: The importance of parent involvement in any school is to have a positive relationship between school and community that also lets your child know that you have their back. Like as a parent,

you want to be involved in everything that your child does. It shows concern about their education, and it builds up the relationship between you and your child. It also shows the teacher that you're there to form a partnership, you're aware of your child's grades, what's going on. And you can also diminish any problems that then -- that may arise if you have a good communication between the school and yourself. So parent involvement is very, very important.

[VIDEO ENDS]

RENEE BROWN: That was one of our former teachers actually, Miss Holmes, who her son is in sixth grade at Discovery Charter School. And we just love, love, love to have a lot of parents. Next, we're going to do about what our kids say, because our kids are -- they're our voices also, so they have some positive things to say about what's going on here at Discovery Charter School and how they look at the school and what they think should be in the school, and how things run in the school or how they love to just be around the school.

[VIDEO BEGINS]

STUDENT: Hi, my name is Diana Mixel, and I just want to say because my mom works at the school sometimes, it makes me feel really good because at the school, I can see her volunteering and take part of my school too.

[VIDEO ENDS]

RENEE BROWN: The kids love when you become a part of the school and how you can show them through your leadership how they should be acting in school and how they should take a lot of things in school. We have another student here we want to show.

[VIDEO BEGINS]

STUDENT: [inaudible]

[VIDEO ENDS]

RENEE BROWN: They decided to play one from my son. I'm going to get him for that one. No, within -- kids love it when they do -- when you are involved in school and how everything is involved in school. We have for the last video for this section.

[VIDEO BEGINS]

STUDENT: [inaudible]

[VIDEO ENDS]

RENEE BROWN: Our kids do love us, and we sure do love our students. Now we're going to move on to what we have titled as home and school association. Why parents -- why parent engagement is important.

It's been said, and they have a lot of facts to prove it also, so you could say the data says also, parental effort is consistently associated with higher levels of achievement. And the magnitude of the effort -- of parental effort is substantial. We found that schools would need to increase per pupil spending by more than \$1,000 in order to achieve the same results that are gained with parent involvement. That's from Conway.

We at Discovery Charter School, we believe that engagement is -- speaks magnitudes. Your students excels better in the classroom. They are not more -- sometimes students become, you know, disruptive in the classroom. They're not as disruptive in the classroom. I mean, they're still students. Now we have to understand that students are going to be students, but they are more geared to learning. They're more happy about learning. They're more looking forward to the day. We're going to play the -- play a clip about the importance of parent involvement.

[VIDEO BEGINS]

WOMAN: Mr. Wilson. I teach seventh and eighth grade history at Discovery Charter School. The way I engage parent involvement is by reflecting their expectations for their student academically, socially, and sometimes even spiritually. Also, sometimes you come across parents that might not have standards. So by sharing your expectation for your student with the parent and not only holding the student accountable, but the parent to be accountable to support, either redirection or follow-up with assignments, and/or indirectly encouraging a parent to give their student an encouraging word, those are ways that I've found to engage parent involvement.

It is very important for parents to be engaged and involved in not only just the student's life at the academic, but also in the school community. Because the more that are involved in the development of their scholar, the more they're involved in the [inaudible] of the school and the many talents and gifts that can be brought into a melting pot, it can only strengthen and inspire continual progression for the student and the school.

[VIDEO ENDS]

RENEE BROWN: Next, we have how DCS does it. Discovery Charter School is kind of, I would like to say, a leader in how parents engage and how we feel about our students, how we get out parents to be engaged, how we get our parents to come about. We're going to have one last clip from a staff member about how DCS does it.

[VIDEO BEGINS]

TEACHER: [inaudible]. Parent involvement, very important. I've seen so many great responses from parents this year because I think they know how I feel about their kids being successful at this great school. I text, I email, I call. They text, they email, they call me. [inaudible] behavior, their work, grades. [inaudible]. Now a lot of times they don't come to the PTA meetings, but they do -- they love to visit our website [inaudible]. And I hope that the years to come get better. Thank you.

[VIDEO ENDS]

RENEE BROWN: That's one of our fired up staff members. We have a lot of those over at Discovery. They're always fired up about learning and parent involvement. We talked about how the students [inaudible] in a previous session already, so we're going to go move down to highlights.

Our highlight's the best thing that I say that we have at Discovery Charter School to keep parents engaged. It's what we call the sell more, pay less program. Our sell more, pay less program is where we sell more fundraisers or we have our [inaudible] Krispy Kreme doughnuts. And the more Krispy Kreme doughnuts that the students sold, they got to put that money into an account that they can hold to go on the expeditionary learning trip.

So the school did not receive the profit for that. The student actually received the profit from that. And when the parents learned that the student can receive the profits from doing that, they went out and sold so many Krispy Kreme doughnuts, we exceeded our last year amount by 1,000 boxes. So this year, we had at least 9,000 cases of Krispy Kreme doughnuts. So the students were just on that, and the parents loved it. That's how one of our greatest highlights I have to say about our sell more, pay less program.

We have a lot of current initiatives at Discovery Charter School. We're always moving and thinking of new things, and doing a lot of highlights. We have tech meetings because we know a lot of our parents aren't tech savvy. So they are there to find out how to work this computer and how to get online, how to see their grades, how to do everything.

We have social media meetings, where we have staff who tell our parents, you know, what social media you should be on, what you should watch out for. This is how you get on this twitter so you can know about what they're talking about. This is how you can get on Facebook to know what they're talking about. This is how you get on this.

So we have so much impact into our students. And we take pride in our parents too in having them. We have chaperone meetings because we do take international trips, because we do go out of the state. We make sure that our parents know how to be a correct chaperone because some parents don't know that. We cannot all -- we cannot live in a world anymore where we just assume that anybody has the same tools and knowledge as anyone else. So we like to help and extend that. And our parents have been great with that.

We also have our healthy initiative this year. Students brought in bags and bags and bags and bags and bags and bags of fresh fruit. And now we're trying to look at having a fresh fruit kiosk at the school instead of having them eat those potato chips. So we're kind of doing an initiative: eat this, not that. Do this, not that. And it's all about showing and helping other students do that.

We have peer sustain meetings. Our grade teams email parents and they text parents and we have the phone gives us calls like two or three times a day as a parent about, oh, we're having a PSSA meeting. Come to find out how to help your student with the PSSA. Come to find out what you need for them, how to help them.

And then our home and school meetings, we also do grade-specific meetings. So each month, we have a different grade team come and to talk to the parents to see what they might need or their expectations, what their expectations might be, what the parent expectation would be.

Our bumps on the road, I would say we still have a little bumpy road with times. That's always tricky when you're dealing with parents, trying to find out a good time to have, you know, meetings. Nighttime is not always the best time, so trying to find us a good balance in doing this. That's what we'd say one of our greatest bumps on the road would be. Now we're going to go head it over to Miss Amanda Bouwman again for our educational highway.

AMANDA BOUWMAN: So our highlights academically, we are proud that we've made AYP seven out of our nine years. And this is our tenth year, so we're hoping to make it again this year. Another highlight is co-teaching, that we've been focusing on inclusion and we have been expanding our special education

department each year so that we can have more special education teachers in the classrooms, in the gen ed classrooms.

We also have teaching assistants in every grade, which really helps the students, especially the students who need extra attention, to get that extra attention. They pull small groups. Many of them are very fabulous teachers as well.

And we also have been doing guided reading, which is leveled reading in the classroom, and the students are reading books that they can read at their level. And I've seen students move very, very far and move up a lot in their levels and their reading. And I think that will also help us to continue to make AYP and continue to see progress in the reading of our students.

Some of the bumps in the road academically, definitely not making AYP for those two years was hard, so we came up with a school improvement plan. And one of the parts of that was having staff mentors. So each student who was basic or below basic the year before was paired up with a staff member who would check in with them and make sure that they were eating breakfast in the morning, that they were getting enough sleep, making sure they were getting what they needed in school and in the classroom academically.

And then we also have tutoring Tuesdays and Thursdays for our third through fifth graders, and on Saturday for our middle schoolers. And that's a requirement for students who scored below basic or basic on the PSSA. And this is just a time for them to review study skills and the things they'll need for the test specifically.

We also started focusing more on special education. And I've noticed as a special education teacher that once we did that, once we were meeting the needs of the lower -- the lower performing students, that it was helping everybody in the school to be successful and succeed.

We also got an online program called Study Island, where the students can practice their study skills and practice taking tests that would be similar to the PSSA. And this year or last year, we got Achieve 3000, which is another online resource that we use for our students to practice. And the students are required to do certain numbers of hours at home, and this is a grade for them.

Another bump in our road is the new students that we accept that come into our school are often lower performing academically than our students who have been with us for a while. And this has a lot to do with the rigor of the education program at our school. So many of these students are referred

or evaluated, and many are found to be eligible for special education. So that's a hurdle for us in how we catch these students up as they join our school and get them on the right track academically.

So the next couple slides just shows our PSSA data from last year, our estimated data. The first one is the math. And now you can see what we scored for our different grade levels, with the target from last year being 78%. And the next slide is the reading, which the target was 81%. And the next slide is our PSSA science results, which was just in fourth and eighth grade. And the last one is the PSSA writing results. So we hope to do just as well, hopefully better in this coming year. I'll pass it over now to Miss Pam Evans.

PAM EVANS: Hello, everyone once again. Before I go on, actually I want to talk a little bit about who Discovery Charter School is as far as our demographics. Currently, we serve approximately 720 students grades K-8. We are located in the West Philadelphia section of Philadelphia, which is an urban school. We have approximately 77 teachers. About 73% of our students receive free or reduced lunch, so are considered low income. And that's about it demographically. Just wanted to give that information so you kind of knew who we were before.

So I am the home and school, or should I say school and community coordinator at the school. What I do pretty much is all things parents and all things community. You know, I work on involving key stakeholders in the school. And pretty much what I am there for is to bridge the school, community, and the parents together.

One of the things that we do is to solicit volunteers. We have done a lot of things. One of the primary things that we've done to get to know -- we feel it's very important to get to know your parents and to provide a parent-friendly environment is one of the things that we really pride ourselves on.

But in soliciting parents, what we do is to give out a -- and when the students first start, we give out a parent survey. What the survey does is sort of assess who are parents are. What do they do for a living? What are their hobbies? What are their interests? In what ways would they like to volunteer in the school? So that when we have events, when we have things going on, we know who to pull from.

And so what this parent survey does is kind of gives us a highlight, again, of who the parents are so that when we're having, let's say, a fundraiser or, you know, if we're having -- for instance, one of the things that we did was to do on our picture day, we asked any parents that were either barbers or hairdressers to come. And we noticed that we had a lot of students that were -- or parents who were

unable to pay for their students to get their hair done for their graduation pictures. And this is kindergarten and eighth grade.

And so what we did is asked any -- we held picture day on a Monday, which usually barbers and hairdressers have off, and we asked any parents in our school that were willing to volunteer who were licensed barbers or hairdressers to come in and do our students' hair for free.

So we put the call out and we got a great response. We had probably about four or five barbers, and about seven or eight hairdressers that came in, did our students' hair. We had one of our parents who's a makeup artist come in. And you know, she did the girls' makeup and, you know, very lightly of course. Put their lip gloss on and made sure that they were beautiful for their pictures.

And it really made them feel valued. The parents were like, wow, this is my specialty, this is what I do. I can offer this to the school. So that's one of the things that they did. So learning to pull from their expertise and not just asking people to do things that they're not familiar with I think really helps us to get a large volunteer base.

You know, when we have things such as Miss Brown was talking about, the Krispy Kreme or [inaudible] fundraiser and we need heavy boxes lifted, you know, we'll go and we'll call all the dads and put a special call out for the dads saying, we need all the dads with muscles to come out. And they feel valued. They feel like, oh, this is something I can do. I can lift this and they really need me. And so that's one of the things that we do is we specialize.

And I specifically hone in on dads because a lot of times in school, you hear all the moms are there, mom picks them up, mom does that. And so I host special parent meetings just for dad. You know, this is all male. We're going to feed you. You know, they always say a way to a man's heart is through his stomach. I'm a firm believer of it. It works. We feed them, they come, and they've involved. And so, you know, that's one of the things we do to solicit parents.

The other thing is that we seek -- seeking, utilizing, and providing resources. Not only do we ask for things from them, but we also try our best to provide resources from parents. Someone may come in and say, listen, I lost my job. You know, are you guys hiring? And we're not hiring, then what I do is I stay close with the community and I get information from my community leaders about what jobs are in the neighborhood. And we connect our parents to those jobs, to those resources. I go to a lot of community meetings where resources are provided.

There's one happening at a shelter nearby that provides GED classes, they provide [inaudible], they provide workshops for working. And so I connect our parents into those different resources so that they can, you know, just feel better about coming into the school community. They know they have a resource there. So I seek resources. We utilize them as resources.

We have parents who are tax accountants. We have parents, again, who are hairdressers. We have parents who -- you know, we have one parent who every year she sponsors a child and just does their hair for free. And so just different things. All of the resources that our parents have in our community, we just sort of work on tying them together.

One of the things we do, going down to community collaboration, is that we reach out to our community. All of our students are -- middle school students are required to do 40 hours of volunteer per year. And so -- and this they have to have done before they graduate. So what I do is I invite our community into our school, introduce them to our school, tell them who we are, find different ways that our students can volunteer at their businesses, at their sites or whatever. And it's a great collaboration.

All of the community meetings that are going on, we work with the Renaissance Faire that's in our community. We work with the [inaudible] association. We work with the Mann Music Center. We work with the Please Touch museum. I sit on the advisory board for the Please Touch museum so that we kind of know what's going on in our community, and our community knows who we are and what we have going on.

Going to jump down one. I'll come back to the -- to the challenges, but for highlights, and this ties in with our community collaboration, one of the things we have is called Pacesetters Day. And what Pacesetters Day is is a day when we invite specifically community members into or school.

And we'll hone in on one specific set of community members, like last month I asked all of our religious leaders to come in. So we invited all of the churches, synagogues, mosques, everything that were in our immediate neighborhood, within our zip code and surrounding, and we invited them in and we introduced them to the community, our school community.

We took them on a tour of the building. We let them see videos of highlights of our school. We sat down with them, talked to them about ways that we could -- our students could come and participate and volunteer at their churches or at their synagogues and, you know, different volunteer opportunities.

We also asked the business administration to come in, so the Parkside Business Association, the City Avenue Business Association, we invited them in. I believe that was in December. And just talked about, you know, do you have jobs available for our parents? Do you have volunteer opportunities for our students? You know, these are things that we have going on. How can you support us in this, and how can we support you as well?

Some of the challenges are, of course, getting those people to come in, getting them to see the importance of being involved in the school and collaborating with us. But we -- I think we do a pretty good job of doing that. And really they see that we're not there just to take from them, but we also have something to offer the community. And so I think that really helps us a lot.

Some of the current implementations, again, is the Pacesetters Day, it's the parent engagement training series that we collaborate in and that we work with. And what that is is through PaTTAN, we've been allowed to gain more knowledge on how to involve and engage parents. And that's helped us a lot. We were actually able to come into the series and walk away with tools that we could use instantly to help us engage our parents more.

And what we found in this was that in doing so, it couldn't just be our specific team, that we really had to filter and saturate our whole -- our whole school community with this information. So what we did as a result, as we took the information that we learned from the series, and when we held a professional development, which allowed us to use this information to our staff, our teachers, so that everybody is kind of on one accord.

And they know -- you know, one of the things that came up out of that professional development that we did was that sometimes we had -- we do have a lot of grandparents that raise kids, and they're not as tech savvy as we would, you know, like for them to be. And so while we thought we were communicating very well, we were communicating very well to the younger parents.

But to the older parents who wanted that old school kind of touch, we weren't really reaching them. So we talked about doing more home visit, doing more personal touch, telephone calls and things like that. And so we were able to walk away from this series with tools that we were able to use immediately. And so anyone that's not participating, you definitely want to stay on this PaTTAN website. It has a lot of tools that you can instantly use.

And so we're going to continue to use those tools. We have other professional developments in place for our staff members at the staff academy. We're going to be talking about from the very beginning, how you can engage your parents.

One of the other things that we used and we'll be implementing as of September at our staff academy is that at -- something they call a half and half letter. It's like my half, your half. What we're going to do is when we send them home the letter in the summer telling them about when school starts and all that stuff, what we're going to do is also send them a feedback form. So they can give us -- you know, normally we hold our back to school night this way. You know, we come in, you do this, this, and that. What would you like to see happen?

So we want to try to get more input from the parents on what they would like to see on back to school night. And actually, there's an entire calendar that they will get where they will be able to say, well, this event, you know, you guys usually hold it like this. I would like to see it look a little more like this. Or this will be more beneficial to us if you did it this way. So this way, the parents feel like they have a say so in steering the way that the school year goes and what happens in the school.

So those are just two, I think, of the tools that we really, really take in and hold to as a result of the PaTTAN parent engagement series through PaTTAN. And I think that there's so many more that we'll be able to incorporate as time goes on.

And so I think that as far as bridging the school community, that that is pretty much it. Want to go on now to what we call our high beams. One of those things is our after school program, which talks about -- is called Discovery Beyond Ours. That is, you know, our after school program. We offer a lot of programs. We do have parents that work with that program.

Again, this is another thing that we're going to be reaching out to our parents, asking them, you know, what programs would you like for your child to have after school? You know, we've kind of decided, you know, we're going to have karate, we're going to have hula hoops, we want to have African dance. But some parents have other things that they would like for their child to participate in. and as a result of our conversation through the PaTTAN series, we found that maybe we need to ask them what they want their kids to have after school. So that's one of the things that we will be doing.

As Miss Brown talked about, the sell more, pay less program was actually pretty much an idea, you know, birthed out of conversation with parents. And our expeditionary trips, you know, being

sometimes very costly, going out of the country, taking international trips. And so they wanted another way that could help them pay for those trips.

So the sell more, pay less program was definitely designed through listening to the voices of the parents. You know, how -- what can we do to lessen the stress on the parents' pockets, especially for those who have multiple children? So that was one of the things.

Our parent involvement is incredible. A lot of people don't understand how we get so many parents out to our home and school meetings. Well, one of the ways is that we feed them. The other way is that we do provide babysitting service.

And the other way is that we take the tools that we've used from the parent engagement series at PaTTAN and we infuse our teachers so that they're touching those parents all the time. They're emailing them, saying, hey, are you going to the meeting tomorrow? Hey -- you know, they ask a question to the teacher and they say, yeah, but you know, we're going to be talking about that at the meeting this Thursday. And so they kind of are infused with, you know, training the parents to be in the school, to be a part of the school. And that's only done through us participating in this program and then infusing that information to the teachers and staff.

And that's every staff member. It's not only teachers. We talk about this to every staff member. So when we did the professional development, it wasn't just the teachers. It was for administration all the way down to the -- you know, to the maintenance man so that they see parents walking down the street, going somewhere, they say, hey, you know, they're having a meeting next week.

Or they ask the question, I don't know, but you should ask that question at the meeting next week. And we do that so the parents will come and be involved. We can hear what they have to say. We encourage them, of course, to communicate with the teachers and other staff members.

Another one of our highlights I think is staff cultivation. And I am going to show a very quick video on that. We are -- well, I'll say one of the top schools, I think, for training teachers. If any new teachers coming into teaching -- and studies shows that actually that in the first one to three years in teaching is the most crucial. Because if you can make it past that three years, then usually you can make it.

And so we are a great cultivating school. We cultivate our teachers. We have training series for teachers. We have people on our staff who are professors at colleges that teach teachers how to teach. And so I'm just going to show a little video clip of one of our -- two, actually, two very short clips of one

of our training teachers, and then one of our teachers who came in as a first-year teacher and what they experienced.

[VIDEO BEGINS]

DIANE TRUFMAN: My name is Diane Trufman, and I've been here at Discovery Charter School for ten years. We -- it's been a great ten years. And when we talk about parent engagement, one of our big topics, I know that I try to engage my parents by being in constant communication with them. We have daily communication sheets in second grade, where I am right now, and also through emails.

And when it comes to having parents come in, I am available at all different times for them. And I encourage them to become involved. And as I said, one of the main ways that we do that is through daily communication with the parents. We talk to the new teachers about that. We enforce making sure that we are in constant communication with the parents because we can't do it alone. We need to work together in order to bring our kids to be, you know, the best that they can be.

And with our new teachers, especially with being an induction teacher and working with the brand-new teachers, really reinforcing that, you know, with that and helping them along and helping them to organize and keep documentation and make sure that the parents are aware, on a daily basis, everything that is going on. Sending home progress reports, making phone calls, but not only when there is a concern, but to let a parent know when good things are going on as well.

[VIDEO ENDS]

PAM EVANS: And now we're just going to hear very quickly from one of our new teachers and her experience at Discovery Charter School.

[VIDEO BEGINS]

PAGE FITZGERALD: Hi, I'm Page Fitzgerald, and I am a special education teacher [inaudible] as a first-year teacher at Discovery.

ASHLEY PHILIPS: Hi, I'm Ashley Philips. I'm also a special education teacher at Discovery, and I teach fourth and fifth grade students. It's my fourth year.

PAGE FITZGERALD: Okay, Miss Philips, as far as parents are concerned, what are your challenges or concerns for the student [inaudible]?

ASHLEY PHILIPS: Okay. So a lot of parents are not really equipped to understanding the process of special education when they first find out that their child might be identified, or if they're going through the process of being referred. So a lot of times, we have to reach out to parents if a teacher has brought up a concern or if there have been consistent concerns over the years regarding a specific student.

And then we have to share with the parent the process that we're going to follow through with. And some of them might be resistant as to having their child be identified as a special education student. Others of them may want the testing to begin right away and it's difficult to really explain to them that the process does take some time to kind of try new interventions first. And then we also need to go through the testing window phase.

And then even if the child is identified, the process of having the meeting with the parent can be pretty difficult. The parent might feel as if they're in a firing squad when all of these individuals are at the meeting because there might be behavioral support staff, there might be special education teachers, there needs to be an LEA chair, there needs to be regular education teachers, and anyone else who supports the child. So the parent, when going through an evaluation, might feel as though their child's being attacked and labeled in a way that they don't think that they agree with necessarily.

So that could be the first thing that happens. Also, another challenge is sometimes when the child is labeled special ed, the parent thinks that it's a carte blanche and allows the child to act in any sort of way that they want in the classroom environment. And they think that the special ed label protects them almost to a fault. So those are some of the challenges that we experience.

[VIDEO ENDS]

PAM EVANS: Okay. What you heard there was actually one of our first-year teachers talk about her experience and challenges as it relates to special ed. I would love to show you the video of her talking about her experience as a first-year, so I believe that this one is it. Give me one moment.

[VIDEO BEGINS]

ASHLEY PHILIPS: Okay, Miss Fitzgerald, how can you describe your experiences as a first-year teacher?
[inaudible].

PAGE FITZGERALD: Okay. Actually, I did start as a student teacher last year in the spring. And Miss Philips was one of my cooperating teachers. I was down in kindergarten. And the first thing that I noticed about Discovery was how much of the community is inside the building. And it's a family. And if

anybody needs help, someone is there to get you, whether it's maintenance or somebody on support staff or one of the teachers or administration. Someone's always available to help.

And then I was hired in the summer to come work as a special education teacher. And I would say it's the same being full-time versus being a student teacher. Everyone is so supportive and helpful. Being a first-year teacher is very difficult, but they made it a lot easier.

[VIDEO ENDS]

PAM EVANS: Great. So those are some of the highlights that we have, some of the things that we kind of pride ourselves on as a school. The final one, of course, is our expeditionary learning. The mission and vision of Discovery Charter School is to tie what students learn in the classroom to outside experiences.

And so for grades K-2, usually they take very local trips, community, in the community. Once they get to third grade, they take their first one-day, all-day -- their first all-day trip. And they do that to Ellis Island in New York City. In the fourth grade, they take their first overnight excursion, which is usually to Washington DC, where they stay approximately three to four days.

And when they get in the fifth grade, they take their first extended overnight trip, which is the Detroit going into Canada. And they take that as about eight or nine days that they go. And they do the whole underground railroad experience, visit all the sites in Canada.

And then when they're in middle school, either seventh or eighth grade, they take their first international trip. Our first trip was to Africa for 13 days, where they spent 13 days exploring, going to school, visiting schools, visiting museums in Africa. Our second one was to Spain. And our third one will be next year, which I believe they're planning to go to Australia.

And so taking those trips, expanding their minds even more, allowing them to, you know, learn about -- they go through a whole year of learning about the country that they're going to, learning about the culture and the food and all those things. And then they go and actually get to experience those things. So those are kind of the high beams that we have at our school.

So what I want to do now is I want to ask -- answer a few of the questions that have been sent to us. And the first one is, when did you start implementing these programs? And how long have you been doing it?

Not sure. Okay, the -- so we're talking about the energy bus. Actually, the energy bus just came on to our school last year -- this year, actually. Something that we decided -- you know, we felt like

maybe the morale of the school was getting a little low or, you know, just people were kind of disengaged some. And so we wanted to put that in place to just remind people why we were there. And so putting in that positive energy and really, you know, getting everybody to sing the same song, going -- letting everybody recognize that we're all going in the same direction.

And so the energy bus actually just came on this year and has been very, very helpful. We use it as a reminder to staff. You know, when we see somebody getting in a negative tone or getting discouraged or anything like that, what we do is we say, ah, stay on the bus. Okay, everybody on the bus. And it kind of just gives you a gentle reminder of why you're there at the school.

The PSSA preps, I'm going to let Miss Bouwman talk about what happens and how that program was implemented.

AMANDA BOUWMAN: So I'm assuming the question here is when we started the PSSA prep. That was when we were in our school improvement plan when we didn't make AYP for those two years, which was probably five years ago, four or five years ago. And we've been doing it consistently since then, so we still are doing it now even though we have been making AYP since it seemed to be making a difference.

PAM EVANS: The next question we have says, we would love to visit Discovery Charter School and see your school. Who should we contact to set up a visit? Well, I would actually be the person. I'm Pam Evans, the school and community coordinator. My information I believe is on the website, so you'll be able to contact me that way via email or telephone. And I'd be glad to have you come and visit.

However, you'll be visiting -- if you come this year, you'll be visiting our old building. We are moving in September 2013, and so we are excited about that. Just a few blocks down, still in the same community. And so, again, Pam Evans and you can reach me at pevans@dscschool.com. Or you can contact me via PaTTAN.

I want to talk a little bit about these guys you see here. I know it looks a little weird. These are the people that we call our heroes, or AKA our BOD squad. And what this is is this is our board of directors. This is one of the ways that we make sure that everybody's connected, all of our key stakeholders are connected to the school.

So we have Wonder Woman, we have Batgirl, we have Superman. And we wanted our students to see that, you know, the heroes are not always the ones on TV. You know, the Beyonces, you know, all

of those kind of people. That there are people right here touching their lives that are actually heroes and making things work at the school.

And so what we did, though, in our groundbreaking ceremony last year for our new building, we asked them to put on these costumes. Some we had quite a fight with, and others were just, you know, can't take them -- we can't get them to take the uniform off. They felt empowered.

But what we did is they came in and they came in on Segways and they came running and flipping and, you know, got the kids all excited. And they just talked about the importance of education. And you know, they came and they talked to our students. We have one, the Green Lantern here, who comes and he still comes and reads to our students. And this is just pretty much our board of directors, who took the time out to come in and say, hey, you kids matter.

So we call them our heroes. This is our BOD squad. And we are excited that, you know, they are -- they are -- they did this for us. And the kids, they haven't forgotten it. They still talk about. That's Wonder Woman! That's Bat Girl! And so that's one of the things that we did.

And what we did is gave them the uniforms kind of according to their personality. Miss Incredible, she's an incredible person. You know, she's in the community all the time. She's finding resources, consistently finding resources for our students. Superman, you know, we keep telling him, you know, he's the strong one, he's the one that -- so we gave them the uniforms according to their character and the role that they play on our board of directors and to our students. and so this is just one of the initiatives that our CEO came up with, and it's been very effective.

Finally, moving forward, we have -- as I mentioned before, we're going to be moving. This is a picture of our upcoming school that we will be moving in as of September, 2013. We're currently in the midst of our capital campaign, trying to raise \$1 million by September, 2013. And we know all of you who have ever moved into a new school or tried to build a school, you know the process of that.

And in that, I'm going to let you see a very funny video clip. And so that can be shown. It's just one of the ways that we reached out to the community about our school. Actually, the one that I'm looking for is not here. I'm going to let you see our promo, which actually tells all about our school and why we [inaudible].

[VIDEO BEGINS]

WOMAN: Well, the mission of Discovery Charter School is to [inaudible] what our kids learn in the classroom to the real world.

WOMAN: And we do that through a couple ways. Major one is our expeditionary learning.

WOMAN: To build a travel continuum that starts locally in the Philadelphia area and allows our students to take virtual trips online and to different countries. We've been to South Africa. We've been to Canada. We've been to Spain. We're getting ready to go to Australia. And it connects because it gives the students an opportunity to not only learn about particular places that are different from where they've grown up, where they were raised, but for them to actually see them.

WOMAN: They become more mature, more educated, well-versed on international travel.

WOMAN: And the continuum goes from K-8, with the motto that if your kids enter Discovery Charter School, they can literally travel the world. First of all, they're going to learn everything that they've learned in the classroom.

WOMAN: And then when they go and they kind of culminate the learning by saying, oh, this is all the stuff we learned about and we're actually seeing it done, seeing it in action. Okay, this is the country that we study, this is the food that we tasted that this country has. This is the language that we learned that they speak here. So it's like the culminating activity to the learning.

WOMAN: We have found statistically that when kids travel outside of their immediate neighborhoods, that they learn better, they maintain that learning, and their learning improves as a result.

WOMAN: We were able to expose students to other cultures within the world that we live. Well, especially with Spain, the students were really excited to see that they ride on trains like we do, that they eat food like we do. When we went to the Mediterranean Sea, they were like, oh my god, this is the sea that we learned about. And they were really excited.

So it was good for them to see that there's things bigger out there, that they can go beyond their neighborhoods and learn stuff. And it gives them something to look forward to. You know, sometimes if all you know is what's around you, you don't have anything to strive for.

WOMAN: But when they go internationally, they find out that no matter where they go, people are people everywhere. We're able to come away from this experience with being able to accept people who are different than ourselves. So it could be anything from wanting to move and travel themselves, to becoming bilingual, to joining world causes, to looking for a job.

WOMAN: And often they want to go back to the countries that we've attended. And that's the kind of excitement we want to create in our students.

[VIDEO ENDS]

PAM EVANS: So there you have it, Discovery Charter School in a nutshell. I don't believe we have any additional questions, and so I'm going to now turn this back to Miss Jenkins. Thank you.

KIMBERLY JENKINS: Thank you. I hope you've enjoyed today's presentation. The parent engagement training series that was spoken about today, the resources are available online at the PaTTAN website. And the materials, everything that they're using now in the classroom and using this year, anyone can access those by just going to the PaTTAN website, www.pattan.net, and going to the parent engagement link.

And we are just about out of time for today, so I'll just leave you with if you need to contact Pam Evans at Discovery Charter School, her email address and phone number are on the slide. And if you have any further questions about the parent engagement training series or resources that are available here at PaTTAN, you can always contact me. And my information is also on this slide. We thank you for attending this series, and please feel free to contact us with further questions or comments. Thank you.