

**Parent Engagement Opportunity Fund
Spring, 2009**

Vernon River Home and School Association

President: Heather Gillis and Marilyn Crane

Principal: David Wood

Name of Project: Literacy Volunteer Appreciation Tea

Goal(s):

- To acknowledge the contribution that parent Literacy Volunteers make to the school and to thank them for their participation.
- To increase awareness on the part of other parents about the literacy volunteer program.

Description:

Literacy volunteers, school staff and parents were invited to the school for an appreciation tea that was prepared and served by school staff, parents and senior students. Principal, Mr. Wood, welcomed the group and acknowledged the contribution that the literacy volunteers make to the school and to the learning process. Volunteers were presented with a small gift of appreciation. There was ample time for sharing stories and socializing.

Did you achieve your goal?

Yes, we did achieve our goal as the literacy volunteers and a number of parents attended. Many other parents participated by providing food and refreshments for the tea and, in turn, became more aware of the role of these volunteers in the school.

Who did the project benefit?

The project benefitted the students, teachers, parents, other school staff members, literacy volunteers and the community at large. The students benefitted from reading with the volunteers on a weekly basis and practicing this important skill. The volunteers also benefitted from their relationship with the children and their connection with the school. Many of the volunteers are grandparents of children in the school or had children attend the school in the past and enjoyed returning to the school. The parents became more aware of the program and the importance that it has in the school. Lastly, the teachers and other staff members had an opportunity to recognize the volunteers for their assistance during the year. This event served as a connection between the school and the community and assisted in retaining long time volunteers.

What challenges are you still facing with parent engagement?

Our biggest challenge is encouraging parents to attend Home and School meetings and become involved in Home and School activities. We made gains in this area last year and are trying new approaches this year to encourage and increase parent involvement.

Thoughts about the project topic (provided by project partners):

Demonstrating to volunteers--who are generally parents--that the school appreciates their work is invaluable. Parents give their time freely for the children. They do not expect recognition but when it comes, it is deeply appreciated.

A gathering to share a cup of tea, sandwiches and sweets is a time to informally share the positive experiences people have had. There can be no better use of parent volunteers than the enhancement of children's reading skills. There is so much to share and celebrate. When Home and School, in partnership with the school, holds such an event, it is a demonstration that parents are recognized as true partners in the education of children.