
1. Cobb Middle School PTA

Family-School Partnership Narrative

Cobb Middle School in Frisco, Texas has taken on the School of Excellence challenge and has worked hard to earn this designation! The PTA, administration, teachers, and staff have collaborated to make our school a wonderful destination for our students and families alike.

We've created a climate of welcoming families with new logos and friendly Welcome signs, including bulletin boards and yard signs in our freshly landscaped front yard by students, parents, and staff. Cobb Beautification Day was a Saturday morning event to clean up and improve the look of our campus. We included a digital frame in the front office to show pictures of all the Cobb PTA events and accomplishments. To build and develop a respectful, inclusive community we added Google Translate to our website and created a sign welcoming our families in many different languages as part of our inclusivity/multicultural initiative. We have increased awareness and inclusiveness of diversity with our Multicultural night that celebrates our diversity by having families host country-themed tables with a variety of food, beverages, and cultural information. We provide interpreters for all meetings and events as needed. We hosted incoming 6th grade boys and girls (separately) and educated the parents about the middle school experience while the kids had time with the counselors. Our goal was to welcome and help new families feel more comfortable and supported.

We communicated in a variety of ways - creating a blog, sending a weekly PTA newsletter highlighting PTA initiatives, and a weekly school newsletter with events occurring on campus for the following week and upcoming events. We also use our website and social media such as FB, Twitter, and Instagram. We started adding pictures to all communications so our stakeholders can browse the pictures if they are short on time. The staff has improved their communication with families, including their response times. There is an option of Google Classroom Summaries sent on a daily or weekly basis and the availability of the Home Access Center (online grading system) for parents to see grades assignments real-time.

To ensure families know about their child's academic progress and how well the school was progressing, the school shares their state and federal report cards, made sure timelines and information about grades, testing, and report cards are available, and as mentioned above, that the families know how and where to look to find all grades in the online system that is available via an app on a mobile device or a computer.

On a larger scale, the Campus Improvement Team, comprised of parents, district leaders, Cobb administration, staff, and teachers, worked together to improve our campus. One of the initiatives was to increase STAAR testing scores for all students, not just the ones struggling. We strategized on ways to improve student success and the teachers/staff implemented student evaluations that directly involved the student as a part of the reviewing, learning, and growth process. After reviewing STAAR results with students, the campus implemented an Intervention and Enrichment program. Students were assigned to four groups: Mastered, Enrichment, Targeted Intervention, and Intensive Intervention. This program

helps to ensure that all students rec'd the support and structure to meet their individual needs. We offered a parent workshop on how to effectively communicate with their students. We also promoted the FISD Happiness Advantage Challenge, which is a districtwide program offered to students and families to increase the level of happiness and improve the educational or business outcome. Attendance was encouraged for district-wide programs including the Student and Parent Empowerment which featured strategies and gave students and parents an opportunity to openly discuss the challenges and learn tangible ways to embrace the pitfalls. As we work on membership for the PTA, advocacy is always the focus.

We increased our membership from 596 to 653 and earned the Silver Lvl Voice for Every Child award and celebrated an all-time high. We hope to increase it even further next year! We promoted/encouraged attendance at the Texas PTA Rally Day on Feb 27, 2017. 4 people from Cobb attended and joined several hundred from across the state. It was an 8-hr round-trip bus ride to spend the day at the Texas Capitol talking to our legislators. We communicated legislative priorities and shared time-sensitive messages where a voice was needed to contact legislators immediately. We shared how important membership numbers are as they relate to advocating for every child. We encouraged families to attend school board meetings, either in person or via the public online link, so they can see the process of how our district makes decisions and get involved to advocate for their children and community. We worked to promote digital safety by providing a program educating the parents about social media and how to effectively monitor their kids' usage. We promoted a presentation held by our Council of PTAs as they hosted digital safety guru, Katie Greer. Several from our school were in attendance for this amazing program. Our Student Resource Officer spoke to the 6th about digital safety, bullying, and sexting. Our librarian gave a Digital Citizenship lesson to students that gave the Pros/Cons of digital media, smartphone and internet addiction, healthy social media behavior, and unacceptable use of social media & consequences. The school always is a wonderful partner in promoting parent leadership and stakeholder feedback. They work alongside and encourage the PTA. Families feel encouraged to volunteer and have done so by providing opportunities for the students, hospitality for the staff, and events for our families.

We have worked with several community members who have sponsored, helped, and interacted with our students. These community members gave us the ability to offer mini-grants for books, flexible seating, classroom tools, etc. Parent and school leaders worked together to do two food drives for underprivileged families and for children who suffer from food insecurity while they are away from school. Parents are encouraged to attend pep rallies and volunteer so they can see what is happening on campus. There is so much more, but we are out of words!

2. Forest Park High School PTSA

Family-School Partnership Narrative

The National PTA has recognized 173 PTA's and PTSA's from across the country as National PTA Schools of Excellence recipients and Forest Park High School PTSA would be honored to join that incredible group. Our goal to improve Family Engagement in Education was implemented and achieved in our objectives to create a culture and climate that welcomes all families and for these reasons, and much more we feel that Forest Park High School (FPHS) PTSA is well deserving of this most honorable recognition.

FPHS PTSA has done its due diligence welcoming all families into the school. On the first day of school, the PTSA along with community partners and stakeholders such as the Forest Park police department, fire department, and local church clergymen and members passed out school supplies and greeted the students and their families as they entered the school. Our presence was made known at the school's orientation and open house when our Administrative team encouraged us to address our students and their families of our goals for the 2016-2017 school year. We also directed and guided families around our beautiful campus. We have volunteered countless hours within our school encouraging our students and families in ways of engaging in various school activities.

We chose to communicate effectively in several ways with our families and school staff. For instance, we attended staff meetings not only so we could better assist our teachers, but so that we may be given insight on how to involve our parents into students learning the process. We provided interpreters in various languages at each PTSA meeting along with interacting with our parent liaison to record Robo calls that go to our families. Our communication efforts didn't stop there passing out flyers to inform our families about upcoming events was a necessity. WE attended Clayton County Board meetings and Forest Park City meeting so that we could bring back very informative information to our families. To ensure no one was missed a "Panther Nation" was created. This blast was a weekly email of all the announcements and school events it went out to the faculty, parents, and students every Monday morning.

As we embarked on this endeavor we implemented a school uniform which consists of our Forest Park High School PTSA T-shirts. This allowed us to be easily recognized by Students. Parents and Staff. Since we were visible throughout the school, these uniforms made supporting students success easy because not only were we able to approach them, it made us more approachable from their aspects. This afforded us opportunities to create bonds and to show our students and families that we were there to support and serve them. We supported our families at parent-teacher conferences and meetings by serving dinners, being readily available and visible to answer any questions that they may have had. Community Partners and Leaders were invited to speak at PTSA meetings. A student forum was coordinated to speak with our amazing Principal Mr. Manning. Allowing our students to address our principal with any of their concerns.

Before we even begin to speak up for every child we first educated ourselves by attending the 2016-2017 Convention Leadership Training Conference and taking PTA University classes. During the conference, we learned the importance of advocating to ensure that our students and families being afforded the best opportunity of a great education. We also were educated on OSD which allowed us to inform our parents and community. To ensure that our students had access to the many learning opportunities the FPHS PTSA joined in the Georgia PTA Day at the Capital annual event. FPHS PTSA met many House and State Representatives.

However, the success that was achieved during 2016-2017 school year couldn't have happened without the assistance of our wonderful, Administrators, Students, Parents, Faculty, Staff and Community Partners. Collaborating as a TEAM to inform, influence, and create programs to assist our most precious jewels our students. The Caring and Sharing Closet was created with the help of donations from our families and staff. The caring and sharing closet provided items such as school uniforms, supplies and personal items for our female students. We were also able to aide in implementing the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) program in our school. MALDEF is a national nonprofit organization whose principal objective is to protect and promote the civil rights of Latinos. This program allowed our Hispanic families to become more engage and involved. Our Hispanic Involvement group was formed and meet every Thursday morning to become educated on better ways that they may assist their students. We had an astonishing number of 24 Hispanic parents to complete the parent education program.

Moreover, the PTSA has collaborated with the Forest Park community and has participated in varies events throughout the community as well as hosting our own events. For instance, we hosted our first annual Fall Festival Car and Bike Show. All families were invited and welcomed to this community event. This assisted in making our presence known in the community. We collaborated with Hartsfield Atlanta Airport to provide our teachers with an appreciation luncheon for Valentine's day. Partnering with Publix has allowed us to provide our families with different food items monthly. Through our collaboration with our community, the City of Forest Park and Forest Park High School implemented an FPHS PTSA Day in honor of our diligent hours of service for our school and community.

In closing, this has been a Phenomenal school year for our entire school and community. We have educated, demonstrated and shown our school and community what a difference an outstanding PTSA support team can make within the school. They responded in a remarkable manner. We truly look forward to serving Forest Park High School during our 2017-2018 School year. In the words of our Principal "This is the best PTSA group that we have ever had". We are grateful for those words of encouragement. Finally, we had an increase in membership of over 1100%.

3. MAST Academy PTSA

Family-School Partnership Narrative

Maritime and Science Technology Academy (MAST) is a Miami-Dade County Public School with grades 6 through 12. Situated in one of the most beautiful locations in Miami, Florida, on a stretch of land, Virginia Key, surrounded by the bay with a view of the City of Miami skyline. MAST provides a Marine setting and nurturing environment for studies leading to academic success, career preparation, an appreciation of the sea, and environment awareness. MAST PTSA (PTSA), parents, teachers, administration, staff work together to install a commitment to life-long learning and advance and improve a challenging curriculum integrated with the sciences and technology. MAST is rated as an “A” rated Florida school, Magnet School of America, School of Excellence, and U.S. News and World Reports Top 100 Best High Schools. MAST has two magnet programs, Maritime for high school students, and Cambridge (STEM and Global Studies) for middle and high school students. Twenty-three percent of students are economically disadvantaged. Twenty-six years ago, MAST started as a magnet Maritime and Science High School. Over the last five years, a middle school was added, and enrollment grew from 500 to 1,500. PTSA SOE goal was to ensure the health and safety of students, ensure emergency preparedness, school and personal safety. In the beginning of the school year, PTSA sent a letter to the Principal, then forwarded to the School District identifying safety concerns. They included cross light timing, an independent safety survey, controlled access buildings, additional security staff, security cameras, after school activities, ID tracking system. The following is the result of this formal inquiry and PTSA partnership in finding resolutions. At the cross light there is a School Police Officer located in the intersection with a vehicle displaying emergency lights each morning. PTSA is purchasing a guard house for the entrance to MAST so visitors can be welcomed, identified, and logged before entering the school. PTSA purchased additional permanent fencing for the perimeter of the school to further secure the campus. The School District added an additional full-time security person to MAST. For evening events/activities, PTSA has payed additional costs for security and/or police on campus. Additional security cameras were added to the buildings and existing ones updated. Real-time images are viewed at the school and Miami-Dade School Police (MDSP) Headquarters. PTSA contracted with outside professionals that gave well-received presentations to all students about drug prevention and anti-bullying.

Welcoming All Families: MAST has a large immigrant community, predominantly from Latin America. Over two-thirds of the students are Hispanic. Most PTSA board members are fluent in Spanish and English. The school’s website, fully funded by PTSA, www.gomakos.org, has an easy online tool that translates information displayed into 30 different languages, including notices of school and PTSA activities and events. The PTSA placed a large banner at student drop off welcoming visitors in English, Spanish, French, German, and Mandarin, and flags for over 30 countries are on display in the main entrance hall.

Communicating Effectively: All activities and events are listed on the school’s website. We prepare and email the PTSA Newsletter to members at least once a week. To reach those families that have not gotten information through either means, we request a “Connect Ed” through the school. This is a mechanism whereby every parent at the school receives a recorded voice message on their telephone

and email. PTSA Board members direct contact information listed on all emails and the school's website. Teachers and staff can also be contacted through gomakos.org.

Supporting Student Success: PTSA invested a substantial amount of time and resources into the College Admissions Program. We partnered with college admission test preparation companies for our students, financially subsidized additional teacher/staff professional training, purchased equipment, furniture, and supplies. PTSA sponsored a College Seminar Night for students and their families. We sponsored a "College Boot Camp" for high school juniors to prepare them for the application process, testing, researching and selecting the right college. PTSA also pays the total cost for 9th graders to take the PSAT. We sent out notices of the National Honor Society offering fee tutoring after school. And have purchased additional testing and classroom resources to help students in their studies. PTSA has contracted with and pays for "Naviance" by Hobsons, a commercial college application and preparation program for students.

Speaking Up for Every Child: PTSA advocates for MAST families' concerns to the school's administration, county officials, elected state and local representatives. We reached out to families, teachers and staff to join us as we advocate for additional school funding, smaller classroom size, and the re-institution for direct state funding for Virtual School for those students who want to expand their studies. We promote FL PTA messages, calls to action on 'veto 7069', and promote and attend district town halls. We established a PTSA fund that financially supports disadvantaged students so they can participate in certain activities.

Sharing Power: Some PTSA board members, with teachers, students, and administrators, serve on the Educational Excellence School Advisory Council which develops the School Improvement Plan. PTSA President meets with the Principal weekly. We also seek out individuals to expand opportunities available for MAST students. We established a Sustainability Committee chaired by a parent who was a leader in developing the sustainability plan for the local U.S. Department of Homeland Security office. Because of PTSA input there are biodegradable cafeteria trays, and a solar telephone charging station from a grant. Another Committee Chair, an award winning artist, is working on school beautification and teacher appreciation.

Collaborating with the Community: We are working with the Village of Key Biscayne and their Educational Advisory Committee to secure additional resources for the school and special projects such as teacher appreciation, and were awarded grants for PTSA College Night and our Fundraising Gala. This year we received over \$20,000 in Gala donations from business partners, and raised over \$60,000 for the PTSA by leasing parking spaces at the Miami Boat Show. We established a relationship with the University of Miami to develop and implement a sustainability plan.

We saw an impact on PTSA membership, particularly with teachers and staff, who we engaged more than we had in the past. We had close to 100% PTSA membership from school site employees. Following is a quote from MAST Academy's principal, Josephine Otero, 'MAST PTSA is truly an extension of our school, their support and dedication to our students and faculty is unremitting.'
