

Improved Communication Gains Community Support

Washington, VT is a community of about one thousand residents nestled in rural eastern Vermont. When their school enrolled in the Family Engagement Tool the team moved swiftly through the self-assessment and action plan and went to work immediately putting better practices into place. When asked about the types of improvements the school has experienced, the principal expressed he has seen better two-way communication between parents, staff, and himself. He added, "We're becoming much more responsive to families and families are becoming more responsive to the school."

During the FET's evaluative process the school team recognized they wanted their school to be the 'hub' of their community and felt they could do a better job welcoming families and the community to their school. They focused their first efforts there. The Principal admits that prior to using the FET they hadn't really thought much about it until "watching a video with examples of other schools got us thinking". And once they began thinking they created a school where families and the community would feel welcome and want to gather. They transformed the main entrance, added comfortable seating for visitors, added a pictorial staff directory, posted a floor plan of the school, and added visitor parking spaces close to the building.

The team's primary objective was to begin integrating school activities into the community and community activities into the school. The school opened their doors for the first time to welcome the community for Community History Night. It was a huge success. Other plans to weave school and community together include offering technology classes, community volunteer programs, book clubs, and free movie nights. The school publishes a weekly newsletter which residents of Washington can pick up at the post office, the general store, and the town clerk's office. It's the school's way of letting the community know what is going on at the school and that the community is welcome to be a part of it.

School Community Network Resource Spotlight

Building Block: Communication ***Resource: Communication Resources***

Communication is a key component in building collaboration that supports student achievement. True communication invites a response, and schools should learn to distinguish the difference between keeping families informed and communicating.

Increasingly diverse student populations call for positive synergies within the school community that fuel student success. This resource has plenty of tips and ideas that will help open communication channels that foster quality relationships and promote positive partnerships.

The **School Community Network's Family Engagement Tool (FET)** is an online family engagement program developed by the Academic Development Institute and is part of the suite of services offered through the School Community Network. The Building Blocks referenced are the framework components common to School Community Network programs and the resources described are available to subscribers of any of the School Community Network programs. For more information visit our website, www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org.