MPSPride *Monthly*

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Our Family Resource Center

Making Connections Between School, Home and Community

As director of the school district's Family and Community Partnership office, Scott Ratchford is always looking for ways to help make connections between school, home and community.

"And our Family Resource Centers," Ratchford said, "are a key piece of this strategy."

That's not just talk. The district hired four more FRC Coordinators in the past few months and now has a full time specialist in 11 different schools, each responsible for supporting families in a variety of ways with the overriding objective of improving student achievement.

"It's a testament to the effectiveness of the program," said Latasha Easterling-Turnquest, who in addition to having district oversight is also the FRC Coordinator at Bowers Elementary.

All nine elementary schools have a Family Resource Center, as does Manchester Preschool Center and Bennet Academy.

FRC coordinators have a variety of responsibilities.

They run lunch groups, inviting the parents and guardians of K-3 students to visit at lunchtime, eating with their children while reading together and building literacy skills.

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Latanya Cockfield is our FRC coordinator. See reverse to learn more.

So parents and guardians, how can your FRC help you?

Here are three possibilities:

Be part of a "Lunch bunch." This is for the parent/guardian of students in K to grade 3. Eat lunch with your child as we read, discuss and bond.

Encourage your child to join a lunch group. Our FRC Coordinator meets with small groups of grade 4-5 students to work on leadership skills during lunch sessions.

Request resources. If you have questions about anything -- from taking an adult ed pottery class to getting a form to apply for free/reduced lunch -- our FRC Coordinators can help you get an answer.

Stay Connected!

We share lots of information through Social Media.

For starters the district has Facebook and Twitter accounts (search for MPSPride) as well as or popular 'Humans of Manchester Public Schools' gallery on Facebook and Twitter.

Washington Elementary School also has a Twitter account @MPS_Washington (which you will also find embedded on the homepage of our school website).

Finally, we have our new mobile app. Just go to the app store and search for "Manchester Public Schools." It's free and in a matter of seconds you'll have fingertip access to lunch menus, schedules, grades, contact info and much more.

FRCs are here to help

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On other days FRC coordinators eat with fourth- and fifth-graders, building relationships as students work on leadership skills.

Coordinators also collaborate, working – for example – with the district's Adult Education department by recruiting parents and guardians for English Language Learner classes, GED classes and so on.

They also get involved with partners throughout the community, helping with everything from hat & mittens drives to developing relationships with various faith institutions to publicizing and supporting programs run by the town's Office of Neighborhoods and families.

"Their flexibility and versatility have been hugely helpful," said Ratchford, who added that funding for the FRCs comes primarily from a grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. "The work of the FRC's is evolving, and will continue to do so. Parents, guardians and other caregivers have a huge impact on their children – on their academics, their health, their social and emotional development and more. By supporting the entire family we are improving the chances for our students to maximize their potential and realize their dreams."

There has been an FRC at Washington for years, but the rest began coming on line during the 2015-16 academic year.

Easterling-Turnquest noted that FRC coordinators have much the same goals as teachers, school counselors and psychologists, administrators and others. "Working to support students and develop positive relationships with families is a team effort and we are most effective when we communicate and collaborate," she said. "But everyone has different roles and responsibilities – and as FRC Coordinators we have the opportunity to build and nurture different kinds of relationships."

She added: "Our goal is for all students to be lifelong learners and contributing members of society, and by working together we can make that happen."

OUR FRC

Name: LaTanya Cockfield, MSW

Born and raised: LaTanya was born and raised in Hartford, CT

Education: LaTanya received her bachelors in Psychology from Bay Path University in Longmeadow, MA. She also holds a Master degree in Social Work from University of Connecticut.

Professional Background: LaTanya has worked for Community Health Resources (CHR) for almost 9 years having different positions within the agency. Her title before she left CHR was a MDFT Clinical Therapist.

Hobbies and interests: LaTanya loves to shop and spend quality time with family and close friends. LaTanya enjoys traveling and enjoys creative indoor and outdoor activities.

Words to live by: "The quieter you become, the more you can hear" -Ram Dass

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