The first RSD’s Parent Engagement Summit was a great success! It took place on Feb 18th at the RIHS. About 50 key stakeholders participated. They included Dr. Mumin, POAs, Migrant Staff, H/S Visitors, Middle School Principals, Central Office Administrators, teachers, parents, and community partners.

The agenda included these items: Dr. Mumin’s vision on School-Families-Community Partnerships, Communications tools used by RSD (Kristin Boyd), a presentation of Ready Rosie (Marcia Vega), and a presentation on current trends in Family Partnerships (W. Alvarado). Participants had a chance to provide their input/feedback in a small group discussion format.

These are some of the issues identified:

**STRENGTHS:**

1. All participants were very pleased to have a chance to interact with other district staff and to hear everybody’s voices and ideas. The consensus seems to point in the direction of having these meeting on a regular basis as well as include more people in the Parent Engagement discussion.

2. All participants agreed on the impact that family engagement has on the school success: higher graduation rates, higher achievement, attendance, behavior, school climate, higher expectations, better student-teacher relationships, building trust, and even cultural competence.

3. All Reading Schools have made Family Engagement a priority goal in their Equity Plan to be implemented during the Spring of 2015.

4. The presence of a full-time Parent Outreach Assistant in every school within the District. Summit participants commented very favorably on their contributions in making connections with families and the community. POAs are “Culture Brokers” or experts on the culture/language of most of our parents, knowledge on how the school system works, and deep knowledge of the community. They are bicultural/bilingual and that makes them vital resources for our district. The same can be said of the Migrant staff. These two groups will be key players during our Cultural Competency Training. Our District has been contacted by the UPenn’s Project for Civic Engagement about our POAs. They want to promote this as a best practice strategy.

5. The implementation of the Watch D.O.G.S project in pilot schools and the immediate plans to expand it to all schools in the District.

6. Our Award Winning Communications Initiative directed by Kristin Boyd. Internal and external stakeholders can connect with the District using different communication tools such as web
sites, newsletters, social media, YouTube channel, radio/TV shows, press releases, Good-News e-newsletter, etc.

7. Parent Access Center available on eSchool Plus. Participants (who happen to be parents) commented on how useful this service is to keep themselves informed about grades, attendance, and discipline.

8. The District decision to adopt free web-based Parent Engagement Academic programs such as Ready Rosie and Go Math.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT:

1. Misuse of time, functions and roles of POAs. Their role reduced to be the official interpreters in the main office or during meetings. They are being used in functions inconsistent with their job description. POAs need a professional working space and they should be included in the School’s Equity/Leadership/school improvement Team. They should be part of any PD available in the school/District.

2. Enhance some schools’ “joining process” with parents by making sure ALL parents feel welcome, honored, respected, and connected to our schools. Staff still receives complaints from parents feeling “ignored and disrespected” at the front desk or during registration of new students.

3. Timely updates of the Parent Access Center by teachers. Parents expressed frustration as they access the services and it is not up to date or there is no information at all.

4. The lack of a Parent Action Committee/PTO/ or any other structure in some schools to plan activities with and for parents/families.

5. The need for PD for both teachers and parents to successfully implement family engagement activities.

6. Most of the parent activities not linked to student achievement: review of curriculum, learning goals/objectives, student performance data, learning kits to do at home, workshops for parents, etc.

7. Inclusion of parents in school decision making via leadership teams, committees, etc.

8. Schools not addressing issues such as cultural competency, social class differences, school violence/bullying, etc.

9. The need to hold teachers accountable to make a deliberate effort to connect and communicate with families (Danielson’s framework 4c).
10. The need for a game plan to help/support parents through the criminal check/clearance so that they can volunteer in our schools.

11. Reactivate the Home Visit strategy to better connect with families. The Migrant Staff have lots of expertise in this domain. They have been successful at this.


13. Create a City/Community Directory of Social Services.

14. Improve our Transition Programs when students are moving to Middle school, RIHS, and RSHS.

15. Create a contact page so that parents know who they need to call in case of particular issues within the school or the District. Detailed information regarding procedures, protocols to address students issues (Parent & Student handbooks?).

NEXT STEPS:

1. Schedule a follow up of the first Summit to keep the conversations going.

2. Engage every school Leadership team in reflection and assessment within the continuum of Family-School Partnerships. Use the previously noted areas on improvement as a point of departure. Meetings facilitated by Mr. Alvarado. Spring semester.

3. Make a decision on PD proposals submitted to the Equity Office on topics on Cultural Competence, Culturally-Responsive Classrooms, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT), Parent Involvement with English Learners (Latino Literacy Project), Be There Project, Communities in Schools, etc.

4. Engage school leadership teams in the book study of “Beyond the Bake Sale” to start taking steps in the right direction.


6. Explore the possibility of creating a Family/Community Engagement Award of Excellence within the District to acknowledge the success of particular school buildings.

7. Explore opportunities for GED, computer literacy, and ESL classes for parents (Parent Academies)

8. Establish a “Family Resource Center” in every school.