

NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



Marketing and Recruitment

Community Engagement

Reaching Spanish Speaking Families

Implementation Description

Movement School Eastland (MSE) is focused on serving the underrepresented Spanish-speaking population in east Charlotte. In order to easily connect with and recruit these families, school leadership made the decision to hire a bilingual Family Student Recruitment Coordinator (FSRC) who is very familiar with the target community. Research supports the inclusion of a community liaison in school staffing as an effective way to “cultivate trust and meaningful connections between school staff, students and families.”¹ The decision to hire a FSRC at 20 hours a week during the school’s planning year, made possible by NC ACCESS grant funding, not only showed a commitment to serving the Spanish-speaking families, it created a conduit for information into the community. Studies show that in order to overcome the language barrier, “Spanish-speaking faculty and staff serve as information agents for Latino parents by helping them gather the necessary information during school visits to help make a decision about enrolling their child in a charter school.”² It has also been shown that increasing a school’s enrollment of non-native speaking students requires an increase in bilingual professional school staff.³

Not only has the FSRC been instrumental in reaching parents, they serve as a conduit between parents and school leadership. As a member of the multicultural school leadership team the FSRD is able to share parent perspectives on school topics and in turn, actively empower parents by sharing a clear message of the many ways MSE can serve their child(ren). Prior to COVID-19, the FSRC held “Coffee and Conversation” events to initiate conversations with those in the community who wanted to learn more about the school and helped

About This School

Movement School Eastland

Small Group Instruction

Launching K-1, we grow with your child. With three classes and six teachers per grade, we develop personal relationships with every family. Each classroom offers a 15:1 student to teacher ratio.

Lead with Virtue

We weave virtue education throughout the day. We nurture an understanding of dignity, a context greater than one’s self, and the belief in giving of self to a greater cause.

School of Nations

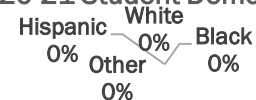
We are a community of the nations, celebrating the diversity of East Charlotte and the world. Students understand themselves within the context of the broader world.

Year School Opened: 2020-21

Grant Awarded: 2019-20

Initial Grade Levels Served: K-1

2020-21 Student Demographics



Projected % ED Student Population: 60%

Urbanicity: Urban/ Charlotte, NC

Persons in Poverty (Mecklenburg County)⁸: 11.7%



coordinate [Movies In the 'Park'ing Lot](#) and [Selfies with Santa](#) events. The FSRC also provides support to families throughout the enrollment process and ensures that all necessary paperwork has been completed and submitted.

All branding and marketing messages are available in both English and Spanish. In addition to being shared in face-to-face



meetings, the school's message is spread via radio ads on a number of local stations with varied audience demographics, as part of weekly [Facebook Live](#) segments, and on billboards throughout the city of Charlotte.

Lunch Plan

Once families learned about the opportunities for their children at MSE, the school wanted to ensure that access to free or reduced lunch and transportation to and from school were not barriers for these families. It has been shown that students perform better at school if they have access to nutritious foods,⁴ but many educationally disadvantaged (ED) students struggle with food insecurity. Proper nutrition can help students manage their behaviors, avoiding discipline and school suspensions.⁴ It has also been linked to improvements in overall health, reducing missed school time due to illness and an increase in student concentration while in class.^{4,5} MSE is working with the National School Lunch Program to provide breakfast and lunch for qualified students. During the school enrollment process, the FSRC provides assistance to families as they complete and submit the necessary free and reduced lunch eligibility paperwork. According to a well-designed five-year study of all California public schools, *“students at schools that contract with a healthy school lunch vendor score higher on statewide achievement tests”*⁶, so the school is working with a local catering company to provide highly nutritious meals for students. The school is equipped with a warming kitchen where these meals can easily be distributed to students.

Transportation Plan

*“Choice-friendly policies open up an array of options, but for many students, choice without transportation is not much of a choice.”*⁷ This disproportionately impacts ED students creating a significant barrier to school choice. MSE has contracted with two buses and working with the FSRC and the results of a parent survey, established easily accessible cluster stops in the targeted communities so any student who needs transportation can ride the bus to and from school each day eliminating this potential barrier to enrollment.

Results

The school opened in August 2020. Approximately 25-30% of the school's families in the initial enrollment directly connected their decision to enroll to the presence and impact of the FSRC.

Data related to the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch support and bus ridership will be collected during the second year of this project as the school implements these strategies.

Challenges

Movement School Eastland is a new school so it does not yet have a proven track record. In fact, before the school could even open, there were misconceptions about the school. The school leadership team wanted to make sure that people had accurate information about what the school can offer to families, so they worked to develop relationships and trust in the community, holding events, and sharing information through a variety of outlets mentioned above.

Future Modifications

The FSRC position will remain and transition slightly to more of a family engagement role at the school, providing opportunities for families to learn about specific topics impacting their child(ren), including the school's education program, student and family support services, and other areas of family interest.

Critical Components

Getting Started

The FSRC hired at 20 hours/week was critical during the school's planning year. Having someone who understands the community and is solely focused on building relationships with families allows school leaders to focus on the logistics of opening the school. The part-time hours provided adequate time for the FSRC to accomplish the goals of the position. It is important to note, that while the school initially planned to hire two part-time positions, they were able to hire one person qualified to perform the duties of both positions. The job descriptions can be found by clicking on the links below.

[MSE Community Liaison](#)

[MSE Student/Family Recruitment Coordinator](#)

Ongoing Supports

Continued funding of a staff position focused on community engagement, especially in the Spanish-speaking community, is critical to the school's long-term success in recruiting and serving diverse populations in east Charlotte.

Equity Connections

The hispanic population grew by nearly 25% in the last decade (Tibbett 2019). Therefore, in order to adequately reach all student populations in NC, the efforts to recruit hispanic students must also increase. In addition to barriers faced by other underrepresented minorities, hispanics face an additional challenge with a language barrier. The intentional decision for a school to hire bilingual staff members whose primary role is to act as a liaison between the school and Spanish speaking families provides an equitable environment for families, both in the recruitment process and throughout the child's enrollment (The Education Policy, 2015).

Additionally, ensuring hispanic families have access to free and reduced lunch programs in their home language enables them to make an educational decision on an even playing field. According to the USDA, hispanics are twice as likely to suffer from food insecurity as non-hispanic white households (2016). Therefore, schools seeking to reach their local hispanic communities must be deliberate in their efforts to ensure equitable access to school lunch programs for hispanic students.

Research

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