

the

ACORN leaflet

ACORN
Woodland
Elementary
SPRING 2010



Preparing young scholars to branch out and achieve higher education



Reading Buddies Luis and Storm celebrate Luis's spelling test success.

Reading Buddies Boost Learning, Build Bonds

When you hear about “cross-grade collaboration” in schools, you might assume it refers to teachers. At ACORN Woodland Elementary (AWE), it also applies to kids: Every Friday, Ashley Martin’s 5th-graders visit Pam Adair’s 2nd-grade classroom for their weekly Buddy Reading session.

“We help teach the 2nd-graders how to read and write,” explains 5th-grader Storm. “We read with them because we want the little buddies to learn and have fun and be very smart.”

2nd-grader Luis, Storm’s reading buddy, elaborates on the collaboration. “Storm does high-frequency words with me, so I can practice them,” he says. “We also write some sentences and do partner spelling and play Hangman.”

Their teachers have watched the program evolve beyond reading, as well. “Buddy Reading started out as just that:

reading together,” reflects Adair. “But now, it’s so much more. If a 2nd-grader has a hard day with behavior, he or she is sent upstairs to spend a little time with a 5th-grade buddy, who helps

“The quality of relationships at AWE is one of our proudest accomplishments. Providing students a sense of being loved and valued at school creates an incredible foundation for academic learning,” says Principal Kimi Kean. “This sense of belonging and being “needed” helps our kids become compassionate and caring leaders.”

support, advise, and calm [the student]...The older buddies [also] took a lot of responsibility recently for our big Career Day, helping the younger ones come up with and write down appropriate questions for the speakers.”

“What I like about Buddy Reading,” says 2nd-grader Ana, “is you get to spend time with your buddy and improve your reading.”

Her buddy, 5th-grader Dalia, concurs. “During Buddy Reading, you get to hang out with the little kids and show them new stuff. You know, I feel good about it because I know I’m doing something for the younger kids, like the older kids did for me when I was in 2nd grade,” she says. “I really like helping the 2nd-graders learn and get their grades higher on the benchmark tests.” (Spoken like a future 5th-grade teacher!)

“Buddy Reading has been a huge support to the school culture we’ve developed at AWE,” says Martin, Dalia’s teacher. “It gives the 5th-graders the opportunity to authentically demonstrate our core values, especially leadership. It encourages them to behave at all times and demands that they persevere academically because their little buddy is always watching. I love seeing the students become such strong support systems for one another. This is, by far, my favorite time of the week!”

“What I see happening in AWE classrooms is among the best (instruction) I have seen in New Leaders schools across the nation.”

Jon Schnurr,
CEO of New Leaders
for New Schools,
after his 2008 site visit

“Family to Family” Dinner Extends AWE’s Parent Outreach

Since before ACORN Woodland even opened, the school has put great emphasis on involving families in their children’s learning. While staff and parent leaders are proud of the AWE Family Resource Center’s successes over the years, they are always searching for new ways to deepen family engagement on campus. To that end, the English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC), the School Site Council (SSC), parents, and school staff recently organized the 1st Annual Family to Family Dinner.

AWE Family Coordinators Esperanza Aguilar and Izola Haynes say the event was designed to gather families together and share ideas “from one parent to another,” with a focus on helping parents support AWE students on the cusp of scoring “Proficient” on the California Standards Test (CST).

During the dinner, parent leaders collaborated with the parents of 15 students approaching Proficient, and those kids received certificates for being poised to reach Proficient by the end of this year.

“It was a great turnout for our community,” says Haynes, “and a great way to support the children who are [almost] Proficient.”

“I felt great because my mom was there to support me when they gave me the certificate,” recalls 4th-grader Jennifer.

“I felt proud to be there because I got to give my testimony,” says 4th-grader Eddy, “and my mom gave a testimony about me, about me doing my homework and reading, and that made me feel great!”

Since the dinner, and throughout this year, “Parents’ involvement has been increasing a lot,” says Luz Navarro, ELAC



member and parent of AWE students Ronaldo and Jose. Both she and fellow ELAC member Araceli Romero (parent of AWE students Jose and Yuneth) say student achievement has “absolutely, definitely” grown in step with family engagement.

“[Both Romero and Navarro] are here every day,” says Aguilar, “and that’s very powerful for the kids.”

These parent leaders have plenty of praise for AWE’s staff, culture, OUSD Superintendent and programs. Romero (pictured above with Navarro, Aguilar, and Haynes) commends ACORN Woodland’s ambitious academic intervention program for improving students’ achievement. (All of Romero and Navarro’s kids are Proficient or Advanced.) She also appreciates the diversity of students and staff, and the fact that Principal Kimi Kean and several teachers are

bilingual.

“We’re very thankful that the school is so small,” adds Navarro. “This way, we know

all the teachers, and everyone knows all the students by name. This makes ACORN Woodland feel like a family.”

SUPPORT ACORN WOODLAND!



Our Family to Family Dinner is but one example of the inspiring community-building activities our Family Resource Center coordinates during the year. Unfortunately, these efforts fall outside of our public school budget – a budget that will take yet another hit in 2010-11 due to unprecedented state cuts.

YOU CAN HELP!

Please consider a one-time or recurring tax-deductible donation online at:

www.oaklandschoolsfoundation.org (designating “ACORN”) or by check to “OSF/ACORN Woodland,” P.O. Box 20238, Oakland, CA 94620.

Thank you for supporting our school community!

“I would happily send my own children to ACORN Woodland.”

- OUSD Superintendent
Dr. Tony Smith



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ACORN Woodland Elementary

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Kimi Kean, Principal

