

ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*At Roosevelt Elementary, Parents, Businesses, Churches, and Nonprofits
Come Together for Student Success*

Roosevelt Elementary of Allentown, Pennsylvania is one of 11 community schools supported by United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley's COMPASS (Community Partners for Student Success) initiative. With more than 35 dedicated partners, including local businesses, nonprofit and community-based organizations, social service agencies, and faith-based organizations, Roosevelt is addressing students' basic needs, such as health and dental care, as well as providing academic and social support through mentoring and enrichment opportunities.



The El Sistema Lehigh Valley afterschool music program, offered in partnership with Allentown Symphony Association, is just one of many examples of the opportunities provided to students at no cost at Roosevelt, but it clearly demonstrates how multiple partners can work together through a community school model to enrich students' lives both in and out of the classroom.

Local music companies donate instruments, parent volunteers provide snacks and organize extra rehearsal time, and university students offer academic tutoring during the two-hour-a-day program—all of which is giving students a more positive image of themselves.

According to one student, “these teachers have confidence in us that we can play these instruments. They believe that we can learn.”

The COMPASS Structure

The Boys & Girls Club of Allentown signed on with Roosevelt in 2005 as the first non-profit agency to

Awardee At-A-Glance

- **Location:** Allentown, PA
- **School District:** Allentown School District
- **Website:** www.allentownsd.org/Domain/886
- **Grade Levels:** Pre-K – 5
- **Number of Students:** 798
- **Race/Ethnicity**
 - Asian/Pacific Islander – 1%
 - Black/African American – 14%
 - Hispanic/Latino – 71%
 - White/Caucasian – 13%
 - Other – 1%
- **ELL Students:** 7%
- **Special Education:** 10%
- **Free/Reduced Lunch:** 87%
- **Student Mobility Rate:** 34%

Who's Who

- **Heather Bennett**, Principal
- **Katherine Jackson**, Community School Director (Boys and Girls Club of Allentown)

partner with a COMPASS community school. As lead partner, the Boys & Girls Club of Allentown employs Roosevelt's full-time community school director, Katherine Jackson, and provides membership benefits to all Roosevelt students enrolled in afterschool programs. The school is also supported by an exceptional partnership with lead corporate partner Air Products, a manufacturer of industrial gases and a Fortune 500 Company.

Similar to other COMPASS community schools, Roosevelt is governed by a core team that includes the

community school director, school principal, chief professional officer of the Boys & Girls Club of Allentown, and a representative from United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley. The team meets monthly to discuss district-level issues relevant to all COMPASS schools, including emerging challenges and opportunities, budget concerns, relationships between providers, and the alignment of programs with academic standards for students.

Roosevelt convenes a leadership team of parents, teachers, and community partners. At the beginning of each school year, Roosevelt's leadership team looks at a "results-based plan" and "sustainability model" says Jackson "to take account of what is and is not yet being provided at the school. We look at the model to see if there are partners in the community who are able to fill the gaps in support." An art initiative and a financial literacy course for parents are two programs that were recently added as part of this process. The leadership team also examines state test scores to see which grade levels are in greatest need of academic-focused programs and other supports.

Dedicated Partners

Roosevelt's Breakfast Buddies program is one example of a support system that came out of leadership team discussions around the school's highest-need students. Now in its fourth year, Breakfast Buddies involves 19 Air Products employees who dedicate an hour each week to mentoring students "who could benefit from a positive relationship with someone outside of their family or the classroom," says Jackson.

The mentors meet one-on-one with 5th grade students for a hot breakfast and other special incentives. While tutoring and learning activities are included as part of the program, the true purpose of Breakfast Buddies is to foster relationships between the mentors and the students, so that the students learn "that there is someone else in the community who cares about them and wants them to succeed."

In addition to providing the Breakfast Buddies program and contributing financially to Roosevelt's community school through United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, Air Products supports students and families in a variety of other meaningful ways.

According to Jackson, "Air Products sets a great stan-

dard for future lead corporate partners of the COMPASS initiative" as they bring "a tremendous volunteer base" to all of the school's evening family engagement activities and provide "unique in-school learning opportunities."

Air Products employees support science instruction by giving liquid nitrogen science lessons and ice cream-making demonstrations. The company also sponsors and organizes an annual Veterans Day celebration at the school, which includes a special brunch with student leaders and celebratory classroom visits with veterans from the community.

Air Products partnered with student leaders to develop, implement, and evaluate a recycling program at the school after the students saw many of their peers throwing water bottles in the trash.

Last year, Air Products teamed up with the American Heart Association to create a volunteer-led walking challenge to promote heart health. Together, 54 volunteers walked 100 hours with Roosevelt students and families. After the initiative's initial promotion, teachers continued to walk an additional 3,645 hours with their students.

First Presbyterian Church of Allentown is another close partner of Roosevelt. Each year, members of the church hand-knit over 350 hats for students. The congregation also holds large donation drives to collect shoes,



Results

Among Students

- Reading proficiency up from 34% to 53%; math is up from 51% to 63%
- Annual discipline referrals have fallen from 358 to 90
- Attendance is above state expectation of 90% every year

Among Families

- 92% participation in parent-teacher conferences
- PTA membership of 62 up from 5 in 2006-07

sneakers, socks, winter coats, gloves, clothing, and toys during a Secret Santa Holiday Drive. The church's mission team also provides parent education in a Systemic Training for Effective Parenting course, which focuses on building "responsibility, independence, and competence in children." First Presbyterian's most dedicated support comes through volunteerism, with an average of 10 volunteers regularly attending evening parent engagement activities at the school.

In recent years, Roosevelt parents have taken a more active role in partnering with school faculty and staff to provide additional opportunities for students and families. The PTA now leads events that used to be organized by school staff members, such as Teddy Roosevelt's Birthday Celebration and the Winter Celebration. PTA members raised over \$8,500 in one school year to fund field trips for all students and to organize community-building activities such as family bingo, bowling, roller-skating, and movie nights. Several parents also lead after-school programs and serve on the school's leadership team. One parent has even written grant proposals to support community school programs.

Connecting to the Curriculum

In 2007, Roosevelt students did not meet AYP in the reading section of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Members of the leadership team, in partnership with teachers, responded by attending the Governor's Academy for Urban Education, hosted at Muhlenberg College, to develop a teaching and learning action plan for the school. The result was Book Blast—a school-wide series of monthly evening literacy events that enhance parent engagement and reading comprehension.

At each Book Blast event, volunteers demonstrate a specific reading strategy to parents, facilitate parent-child reading groups, and present new books to all of the par-

ticipants. Attended by an average of over 200 parents and children and supported by 50 staff and community volunteers every month, Book Blast has generated school-wide excitement for reading and become a "best practice" of the COMPASS initiative.

Roosevelt's afterschool programs are also closely aligned to their curriculum. "We make sure that all of the providers at our school know what the district is trying to achieve with our students and then we invite them to supplement learning experiences after school with their own expertise and unique offerings," says Jackson.

Quarterly meetings for all program providers create a community of practice for exchanging ideas, sharing "best practices," and aligning programs with shared initiatives and state standards. When El Sistema was in its first year, it was led by teaching artists who were "passionate about music and kids," Jackson says, but needed some guidance on structuring the program around site-specific challenges. Some of Roosevelt's teachers volunteered to provide "feedback and ideas for better aligning the program with school-wide classroom management strategies."

Roosevelt's positive school culture is an outcome of the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) program, which uses techniques to help students develop



self-control, emotional understanding, positive self-esteem and relationships, and interpersonal problem-solving skills. Program providers use the same problem-solving strategies that are used during the regular school day to share a consistent message with students after school.

Other partners, such as Muhlenberg College, are supporting students through individual and small group tutoring during the school day. Last year, volunteer tutors provided over 300 hours of tutoring in reading and writing for 132 students as part of the America Reads program, while also challenging the students to think about college and career options. To help students visual-



ize their futures beyond high school, Muhlenberg College also hosted field trips for Roosevelt students. The college's DanceMax Moving Company helps prepare students for PSSA exams by teaching them memorable song and dance jingles based on key test-taking strategies and concepts.

The rich mix of expanded learning opportunities at Roosevelt has resulted in many more students participating in afterschool programs. The number has increased by over 50 percent over the past two years, with more than 57 percent of students engaged in programming. This growth also corresponds with better attendance in school, improved behavior, and increased reading and math



scores. As examples of major improvements at Roosevelt from 2006 to 2012, reading proficiency scores moved from 33.8% to 52.8% and the number of office discipline referrals has dropped from 358 to only 90.

A Plan for Sustainability

United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley supports Roosevelt's community school through a three-year grant cycle. Due to the success of the COMPASS community school initiative throughout the entire Lehigh Valley, this flow of support is likely to continue as other nonprofits and corporations seek partnership opportunities with existing community schools. The Boys & Girls Club of Allentown and Air Products have also expressed their commitment to seeking additional resources to maintain and grow the services provided at Roosevelt.

Sustainability can also be viewed in terms of whether students leaving Roosevelt after 5th grade are able to attend schools with the same types of services, programs, and attitudes toward partnership. As Roosevelt feeds into South Mountain Middle School, which is also a COMPASS community school, students are able to continue receiving the same supports offered at the elementary level.

Recently, Jackson says, "the belief in what community schools can provide for students and families has spread to Roosevelt's many partners. All of our faculty and staff, parents, and program and service providers know that we're a community school and use that language as a unifying force to seek greater opportunities for our students."

According to Jackson, "it's gone well beyond the role of just the director reaching out to the community for support. The deep level of commitment from all of Roosevelt's partners means that we have many hands extending the reach of impact in our community."

Partners

ADP • Air Products • Allentown Health Bureau • Allentown Housing Authority • Allentown School District • Allentown Symphony Association • B.Braun • Baum School of Art • Boy Scouts Minsi Trails Scoutreach • Boys and Girls Club of Allentown • Cedar Crest College • Community Bike Works • Community Services for Children • Da Vinci Science Center • DeSales University • Diakon Family Life Services • El Faro Lighthouse Church • El Sistema Lehigh Valley • Embrace Your Dreams • First Presbyterian Church • Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania • Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network • KNBT • Lehigh Valley Network Miles of Smiles Dental Van • Lehigh Valley's Educator's Credit Union • The Literacy Center of Lehigh Valley • Messiah College • Miller Symphony Hall • Muhlenberg College • Paragon Transit • Penn State Lehigh Valley • Profits Plus Fundraising • Push the Rock Ministries • Sacred Heart Hospital On-Site Health Clinic • St. Luke's Hospital • Target • Treatment Trends Veterans Sanctuary • United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley • Zian Evangelical Church