



## A Community School in Action Carlin Springs Elementary School

Arlington County Public Schools- Arlington, VA

### Carlin Springs – Making a Difference

Fitting of a high-performing community school, Carlin Springs Elementary School has had a significant impact on their students, families, and community. Students have improved their standardized math and reading scores and are

#### 2008-2009 School Year

Student Population: 525 students (grades pre-K-5)

#### Demographics

- Approximately 30 countries represented
- 80% free and reduced lunch
- 61% Limited English Proficiency
- 14% Asian, 15% Black (includes African), 66% Hispanic, 4% white

attending school more regularly. Critical to these achievements is strong parent engagement. Carlin Springs is committed not only to seeing their students succeed, but making sure that their families and community are engaged.

In recognition of their excellent results, in 2007, Carlin Springs

received the *Community Schools National Award for Excellence*, recognizing the school’s focus on results, extended learning time activities, and high family and community involvement to address real student and family needs.

At the foundation of Carlin Springs’ success is the relationship between the principal and the community school coordinator. Their work is inextricably linked – enabling students and families to achieve success.

Carlin Springs is a fully state-accredited elementary school that serves an international community of children in grades Pre K -5. The school offers a variety of academic enrichment and supports to all of their students and families, preparing students for their future - as knowledgeable, literate, and responsible citizens.

The school has many partnerships in place to support students and their families. They also have parent and community volunteers to help meet the student’s needs and mentor them on their road to academic success. There are 29 partner organizations, 5 grants, and over 80 volunteers on the Carlin Springs team.

### Meeting Academic, Health, and Social Needs

Most Carlin Springs students come from immigrant families, of which more than half are English

language learners, and many face economic challenges. For some schools, these factors would create barriers for students’ learning. However, at Carlin Springs, students are succeeding and developing a lifelong passion for learning.

#### A Few of Carlin Springs’ Community Partners:

- Arlington Department of Human Services
- Educational Theater Company
- Arlington, Va. Federal Credit Union
- Capital Area Food Bank Kids Café
- Arlington Soccer Association

The instructional program is both challenging and enriching – in part because of their partners who play a key role in the activities and curriculum.

Teachers and community partners at Carlin Springs are employing techniques that bring the curriculum to life. They are engaging students in real world problem solving and experiences. For example, the school-based branch of the Arlington, VA Federal Credit Union is student-run. Building on the economics units in grades 2-5, students in the credit union and the banking club sponsored by E\*Trade Bank, learn all aspects of savings, budgeting, and the functioning of credit unions and banks.

Class size ratios are small, and children receive individualized attention from a variety of well-trained teachers. Learning is also extended during the summer with full-day programs.



Complementary to a deep and engaging curriculum, Carlin Springs offers a variety of programs, services, and supports for their students, families, and community members. The after-school enrichment activities, funded through 21st Century Community Learning Center resources, are designed to reinforce and enhance what is learned during the school day. In order to strengthen the home-school connection, Carlin Springs offers home visits, parent-toddler developmental playgroups, parenting workshops and classes, family library nights, and curriculum nights. Families are linked to health and mental health services through on-site county and school staff.



## Producing Results

Carlin Springs' leadership is committed to self reflection and improvement. They understand the need to know if their community schools' work is producing positive results for their students and families. Results accomplished include:

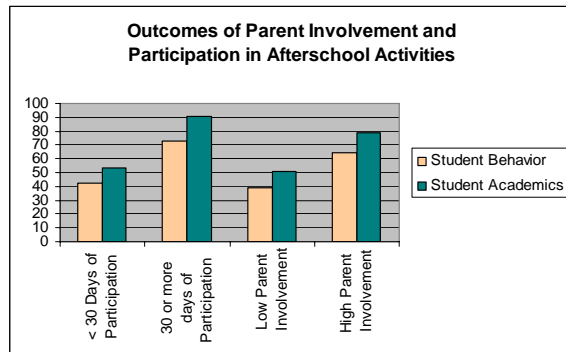
- Increased opportunities for **after-school activities** that reinforce the curriculum.
- Increased **parent involvement** so they can become more effective partners in their children's education.
- Increased **parents' skills** in English, literacy, and technology.
- Increased **access** to health, mental health and social services for *families*

Through an evaluation for the 2007-2008 academic year, Carlin Springs found that *essential to the students' academic success* was **1) engagement of parents; AND 2) student participation in after school activities**. As a result of increased parent engagement and student participation in after school activities, Carlin Springs Elementary School students have improved their academic skills and behavior which in turn improved academic achievement. For more information on evaluation results visit:

<http://tiny.cc/V4Dky>.

For more information on Carlin Springs Elementary School - winner of the *Community Schools National Award for Excellence*- visit:

[www.apsva.us/carlinsprings](http://www.apsva.us/carlinsprings)



The Coalition for Community Schools, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership, is an alliance of national, state and local organizations in education K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health and human services, government and philanthropy as well as national, state and local community school networks.

The Coalition supports the community school strategy because it provides access and leverage of local resources and programs, changing the look and feel of the traditional school structure to best meet the needs of children and families in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## Carlin Springs – A Winning Team

The cornerstone of a successful community school is strong leadership and communication between the principal and community school coordinator. Without this leadership, collaboration with staff, family, students, and community members would not be possible. The following are the on-site team members: **Corina Coronel**, Principal; **Anne Vor der Bruegge**, Community School Coordinator; and **Esmeralda Galeas and Norka Antelo**, Parent Liaisons.



Coalition for Community Schools at The Institute for Educational Leadership

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