

education
for a better
world

School Case Studies

Three different schools with a common denominator—committed parents

Mentors, benefactors, advocates—and heroes; parents are critical to the IB's ongoing success. From organizing events to raising funds, IB parents partner with teachers and administrators to enrich the IB experience. Here are examples of parent contributions at three IB World Schools.

A K-5 neighborhood and magnet school

Parents at River Oaks Elementary in Houston help their kids tackle the Primary Years Programme's most challenging project—the exhibition. The culmination of months of independent inquiry, the exhibition demands a measure of self-discipline uncommon in elementary school students. Parents help River Oaks kids stay on track with weekly review sessions throughout the exhibition project cycle. Working with small groups of students, River Oaks parents mentor for success, helping their PYP kids set and hit project milestones. Parents also arrange and chaperone project-related field trips and schedule expert guest speakers.

"We've had doctors from the medical center and businessmen from energy companies," said IB coordinator, Liz Goodman. "It's fantastic because they bring real-life experience to these kids. I have a parent who works at a cancer hospital who took the kids on a trip to interview doctors studying lung cancer. We had another doctor working with a group on cloning, and they went to a cloning lab to experience that process."

Celebrating diversity in Dade County

United Nations Day in Miami

Every year the parents of Frank C. Martin International K-8 Center in Miami organize an international fair in honor of United Nations Day. The myriad cultures of the school's population are represented, with parents running booths serving refreshments from every corner of the world while students dress in the traditional attire of their ancestors.

Nineteen-year teaching veteran and IB coordinator Elyse Waronker is always floored by how much thought and energy the parents put into this celebration of multiculturalism. She calls the fair “a mini-history lesson that engenders mutual respect.”

Parents and portfolios and the PTA

At the Frank C. Martin K-8 Center, parents are active participants in the student-led conferences. It's not only a chance for students to share their portfolio work (and their infectious enthusiasm), it's also a mentoring session with parents helping their PYP kids set realistic goals for the months ahead.

“It's not a parent-teacher conference day,” Waronker stresses. “It's a student-led conference. We do that starting in first grade and all the way up to eighth grade.” The parents' reaction? “They love it because they love being able to come in, sit down in a relaxed environment with their kids and actually have the kids talk about what they're doing in school.”

“The parents are very active here and very, very supportive. I don't know how we would function without them. They understand this is a great opportunity for their children. And I think that's why we have so many parents who want to get their kids into the programme here.”

Elyse Waronker
IB coordinator
Frank C. Martin Elementary School
Dade County, FL

The PTA is everywhere

When the PTA isn't busy helping out at the media center or raising funds for classroom resources and professional development, the parents at Frank C. Martin get creative—organizing special programs like Lunch Bunch, a repeating off-site, al fresco luncheon in a gorgeous Miami location.

Christ Church Episcopal does lunch

From seeding and watering the kindergarteners' Primer Garden to organizing Service/Learning trips like delivering Meals-on-Wheels to the elderly, the parents of Christ Church Episcopal School (CCES) are dedicated, active participants in their children's IB education.

The CCES parents rose to the occasion when they learned that classroom and special area teachers were having difficulty synchronizing their lesson plans because of scheduling conflicts. The parents instituted PYP Lunches, taking over classroom teacher supervisory duties in the cafeteria so classroom teachers could coordinate their lesson plans with teachers of special area subjects like Spanish, art, music, technology, and physical education.

“It's a great service to us,” says Terri Garvin, the PYP coordinator at the school. “It's enabled us to really deepen our units, and to plan deeply with the special area teachers.”

Greenville Medici—art meets commerce

Christ Church Episcopal students can also thank their parents for the support they give the IB's units of inquiry—which are projects focused on specific disciplines. In one third-grade unit of inquiry called "Common Sense," the kids start up a business. For the final activity, parents spend the morning shopping in CCES third grade classrooms. In another third-grade unit of inquiry called "Imagination," the children write poetry, paint, sculpt, and ultimately exhibit their work to the parents of Greenville in the CCES Third-Grade Gallery.

As these examples demonstrate, there really are no limits to what parents can contribute. With the IB, there's always plenty of room for energy and creativity.