



Community Partners: Sherman Multicultural Arts School and the Sherman Park Community Association

School Information: [William T. Sherman Multicultural Arts School](#)

5110 West Locust Street
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Telephone: 414/874-5800
Principal: Dr. Anita Sparks

Problem

In late August, leaders of both the School and the Association met to plan how they could bridge the gap between the limited resources of the school and the increasingly increasing needs of the students. Decisions made by entities outside our community were negatively affecting educational practices at this school. All parties agreed that research was needed to answer the following questions:

1. How do we bridge the gap between the limited resources possessed by the school and the unlimited demands students and needy families place upon it?
2. What is “your” perception of Sherman School?
3. How does the School mirror the Community?
4. How can collaboration between Community Businesses and Residents enhance children’s lives at Sherman School?

Research Methods

In order to answer these questions a series of focus group meetings were held at Sherman School with specific stakeholder groups. On August 24th three groups of residents representing both themselves and groups they belonged to gathered. On September 27th students met to contribute their views. On October 4th school staff met and finally on October 24th a parents group met. The focus groups provided a venue for open brainstorming and culminated in a voting process wherein each group could prioritize its findings into action items.

Findings

Group discussion revealed the following:

- ✓ All groups agreed that the school needed help. Students and their families are dealing with economic and nutritional conditions that have been deteriorating at an alarming rate. The

school is a mirror for understanding how Sherman Park has been affected by current systemic negative economic conditions.

- ✓ All groups contributed to enumerating a mixed perception of the School. The School had been negatively viewed in the past. But the present staff and principal are regarded in a positive light. This perception provides a sound platform for improvement.
- ✓ Student well-being is negatively challenged. School students are children from the immediate community. They walk to school. They come to school in many cases needing food and clothing. The School is providing, in some cases, three meals a day. It is dealing with social issues that diminish the ability of students to achieve their full academic potential.
- ✓ Reduced curriculum enrichment activities have negatively affected student learning. As the school district has responded to reduced funding and population attrition, programming at Sherman School suffered.
- ✓ In general, Sherman School needs all the help it can get.

Recommendations

Because of this community collaboration, the following action items emerged. They include but are not limited to:

1. Obtaining financial support and/or grant funding for employment of a full time Community Organizer. The duties of this individual would be to coordinate on-going partnerships with community volunteers, local non-profit organizations, church/congregational communities, and interested businesses.
2. Raise funds to provide more “specials” (music, art, gym, dance, field trips, etc.) for our children.
3. Expand and support mentoring and tutoring programs in the school.
4. Organize venues for the donation of food, clothing and associated school supplies. The students and their families should see Sherman School as a catalyzing agent in the community focused with its community partners on bettering their lives in myriad ways.

Summary

The foundation of a unique collaboration between Sherman School and its surrounding community has been established. We all are challenged to follow through. The Sherman Park Community Association is there to help.

Example: On the recommendation of our focus group research, the Association is sponsoring feeding 15 families with Thanksgiving Meal Packages. This is supported by \$30 donations from our membership. You can donate to this activity tonight. **Can we count on you?**