

Pennsylvania PTA Cultural Awareness in Family Engagement Mini-Grant

Cultural Family Fun Night @ William Prescott Elementary School Spring 2015

PTA name and local unit number:

William Prescott Elementary PTA

00021843

Applicant:

Annie Hounsokou and Julie Schumacher Cohen, PTA Officers

Brief description of request:

This grant will support a Cultural Family Fun Night at Prescott Elementary School in Spring 2015. The aim of this event is to celebrate the school's diversity and provide an event at which all students and their families can showcase their ethnic background and culture, whether they have lived in Scranton for generations or are newcomers to the area. The funding will support supplies needed for the event, including a tent, drinks and paper goods. Additional support will be sought through in-kind contributions by musicians or other performers as well as refreshments brought by families or donated by Scranton food vendors.

What do you plan to do?

This grant will support a Cultural Family Fun Night at Prescott Elementary School, run by the PTA in cooperation with the administration and teachers. The festival will be a one-day after-school/evening event, which will highlight each country represented by a student at the school. Families will be asked to participate in a "potluck" in which they can bring a homemade dish. Students will be asked to prepare informational posters on the country they are from or their family's ancestry. In addition, the event will include other carnival-style activities, music, games and entertainment. This new Cultural Family Fun Night event builds on Prescott's existing Family Fun Night event and is modeled after a "Festival of Nations" event held at the University of Scranton. In this way, it utilizes a medium that families are accustomed to, while adding a new dimension to both engage and celebrate newcomers to the community. Cooperation will be sought from the University, including the possibility of using materials prepared by University students about different countries as informational pieces at the Prescott festival.

Timeline (when is your program going to take place)?

December-January: Finalize date in cooperation with various partners

January-February: Work with teachers to develop classroom or homework assignments to highlight cultures and backgrounds of all Prescott students

March: Outreach to Scranton area cultural performers and musicians for pro-bono or discounted services

April: Advertise to families through a flier, at PTA meetings and via the PTA Facebook page; buy supplies (tablecloths, drinks, paper goods), secure performers/musicians

May: Implement event in May 2015 (exact date TBD).

What do you hope to accomplish?

We hope to celebrate the many cultures and backgrounds represented by the diversity of the children and families enrolled in Prescott Elementary School and help new families feel included in the life of the school. Allowing families to teach other families about where they are from, and encouraging them to take pride in their heritage is a non-academic way of affirming our students. It is also a way of introducing people from different cultures to each other, thereby increasing well-wishing in our community. The Scranton School District's motto is "educating students from all over the world" and at Prescott alone 16 languages are spoken, including Spanish, Urdu and Nepali. This event will serve as a way of highlighting new and old immigrant communities and cultures – the families with Italian and Irish ancestry will be asked to showcase their culture as well as newer communities in the Scranton area, such as Bhutanese and Latino families.

Benefits to students, families, and school

The benefits will be many, from community building and the celebration of diversity for all stakeholders to educational enrichment for students on topics related to culture, history, cuisine and foreign language. We also hope that it will increase participation in the PTA from parents who might feel shy because they are new in the area. Because it builds on an existing event, adding new elements we hope to engage a broad swath of the families represented in the school. Finally, we hope to implement this festival in such a way to be replicated on an annual basis and used as a model in other schools in the Scranton School District.

Principal signature

Mr. Albert P. O'Donnell

Albert P. O'Donnell

PTA president signature

Mrs. Kate Cobley

Kate Cobley