Turning the Page
Engaging Families for Student Success.

Program Highlights
2014-2015
Investing in Communities: Ward 8, Washington, D.C.

Turning the Page is committed to making a long-term investment in communities and building enduring networks between parents, schools, teachers, and community organizations.
Turning the Page links public schools, families and our community so that, together, we can ensure students receive valuable educational resources and a high-quality public education.

Turning the Page is confident that with hard work and continued cooperation, we as a community can improve the education of D.C. public school students by engaging their parents and families as active and effective participants in their children’s education. Through resource-rich programming, trust in our relationships and those we support, and a dedicated, detail-oriented staff, we look forward to building on our continued successes in the communities we serve.

Turning the Page’s current programs include Community Nights, Author Visits, and Summer learning events, as well as Parent Leadership programming, teacher professional development and book distributions for families’ home libraries. TTP programs build on each other over time, as school communities and parents leaders become skilled and confident in their abilities to improve education through ongoing family engagement. Ideally, the practices TTP instills and supports within communities and schools will remain in place for many years to come.

“Even if you’re quiet, even if you don’t think you’re a leader, you are a leader, because the things that you take away from Turning the Page show you how to get things done in your children’s school.”

— TTP Parent Leader

Community Nights are the cornerstone of our work. Eight take place at each Turning the Page partner school per year, occur weekday evenings and consist of educational parent workshops, literacy-based child mentoring, book distributions, and a healthy family dinner. TTP integrates the latest reading and educational research into interactive, engaging workshops that enable parents to more effectively support their children’s educational development both in collaboration with their children’s teachers at school, and at home. At a typical Community Night, parents are broken into groups based on children’s grade level, learn strategies to support children’s learning in every subject and gain critical, school-specific information directly from school faculty and staff. Meanwhile, students are mentored in literacy-based activities by volunteers, TTP staff, and local university students.
Community Nights: Families Learning Together

Elementary School Workshops: Math and Science

At every Community Night, we bring together parents, teachers, and community members to share resources and discuss an important element of their students’ education. During this year’s Math and Science Nights, a favorite part of the Community Night series, we transformed our cafeterias into do-it-yourself home experiment carnivals. Everyone became scientists as parents and students blew soap bubbles, brewed slime, estimated prices at a pretend grocery store, created “lava in a cup,” and even made their own ice cream. Educators from the NIH showed families how to extract DNA from a strawberry! All of the activities at Math and Science Night—even the ice cream and DNA extraction—used simple household materials so families can easily replicate them. Parents and teachers discussed how experiments like these can ensure that children have ample opportunities to explore the world around them.

Author Visits

Our Author Visits at each partner school connect families to volunteer writers and illustrators twice a year. Our spring 2015 visits showcased how family history becomes the subject of children’s stories. Book artist Sushmita Mazumdar used her book, Little Lantern and the Dark and Moonless Night, to share with families how she wrote her daughter a story about Divali when she couldn’t find a version with which she identified. Ms. Mazumdar then led Kramer MS and Savoy ES parents in creating their own books about childhood memories, empowering their children to create stories from their daily lives.

Reach Inc.’s student authors have the same mission: to tell the stories that are important to their community. At MLK Elementary, the Reach tutors from Ballou HS in Ward 8 shared their published perspective on Washington DC, through books such as A-Z: The Real DC. MLK students and parents were proud to hear accomplished students from neighborhood schools tout stories from their experiences growing up in Southeast. We also shared author visits this year with Marc Tyler Nobleman, Erica Perl, Carole Geithner, Mubina Kirmani, Andrea Menotti, Fred Bowen, Gareth Hinds, and Susan Stockdale. Thank you authors!
**Middle School Community Outings**

During the 2014-2015 school year, families from Hart Middle School and Kramer Middle School joined TTP for three special off-site Community Nights. These trips allow TTP to connect middle school students and parents to college access and career success resources and experts in Washington D.C. These experiences provide middle school families with the information they need to begin exploring options beyond high school.

**Night At the Museum**

In March 2015, TTP and the National Museum of Natural History held our second annual evening at the Q?rius Exhibit. The behind-the-scenes visit began with a panel and Q&A session with expert scientists from the Smithsonian and the National Institutes of Health’s Humane Genome Project. Each scientist used their own career path to encourage students to pursue science in college. Then, panelists’ research came alive in the exhibit itself. The scientists shared specimens from the bottom of the ocean, taught families to identify differences between rocks and minerals, and explained how to track common genetic traits. Students and parents chose from hundreds of real artifacts to examine under microscopes, and handled real bones from the Yorktown Archeology Site in the forensic lab.

**College Visits at GWU and Howard University**

Turning the Page hosted two college nights during the ‘14-15 SY; one to George Washington University in the fall, and one to Howard University in the spring. Our longtime partner DC Reads helped us facilitate the first at GWU, which featured tours and a panel including GWU staff from the multicultural center and a representative from NOVA Community College. In April, families experienced a second slice of college life on Howard University’s campus, one of the Nation’s top rated Historically Black College or Universities (HBCU). Trained Howard Ambassadors gave tours and shared what it’s like to live and study at Howard, and why they chose to attend an HBCU. TTP convened a panel of college experts for a Q&A with families: HU staff, students, a representative from the Office of Federal Student Aid, and the Director of Posse DC offered advice about financial aid, how to prepare for college in middle school, and what colleges look for in prospective students. As the night drew to a close, one Kramer student summed up the spirit of the evening, stating simply, “If I was a college student I would study every day for my family so I can achieve something in life.”
Supporting Parent Leaders

Parent Leadership Conferences
Twice a year, Turning the Page hosts an all-day Parent Leadership Conference for parents across all of our D.C. partner schools. At these Saturday events, parent leaders connect and explore school policies while students join TTP staff on an educational field trip. At our November 2014 conference, while students explored the National Building Museum, parents learned about the new standardized test, the PARCC, from Valen Cayetano, the Director of Assessments at DCPS. The presentation sparked a discussion about technology access and inspired several parents to advocate for greater computer access at schools in Ward 8 at their schools and to the D.C. City Council. At our May 2015 conference, held at the beautiful new community center Gateway DC in Ward 8, a representative from the NAACP came to discuss discipline and school pushout with parents. At the end of the session, parents spoke about the power of coalition and strong organization. They resolved to join and revitalize PTAs, to bring technology to their student’s classrooms, and to lead improvement initiatives at their schools, such as community gardens, to strengthen their communities.

The PTSA At MLK Jr. Elementary
MLK’s Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) took off running this fall. In one school year (’14-15), the group grew from a handful of parent leaders to an organized force of sixty members. PTSA President Kimberly Johnson and Vice-President Fahim Shabazz, longtime TTP participants, spearheaded the inaugural year’s efforts. They led a holiday food and toy drive for MLK families, launched the student Valentine’s Day carnival, and led the annual Scholastic Book Fair. National organizations are taking notice of the longtime efforts of MLK parent leaders to bring teacher support, technology, and funding to their school and the entire Ward. The National PTA awarded MLK the distinction of Most Productive DC PTSA in February 2015, and Kohl’s donated $500 directly to the association. President Johnson was recently selected, along with two other TTP parents, as one of three Ward 8 representatives to the 2015 Chancellor’s Parent Cabinet, giving her a platform to advocate for issues important to her school at a district level.
**Bullying Prevention Initiatives at Hart Middle School**

Hart’s bullying prevention initiative emerged when the PTA polled the student body about campus climate and culture. Over 70% of the surveys highlighted negative peer-to-peer interactions as cause for concern. The PTA mobilized, secured funding for the project, and turned to TTP to connect parents to the people and resources they need to prevent bullying. With the help of DC’s Citywide Bullying Prevention Program and The Future Project and informed by our participation on the District’s Youth Bullying Prevention Taskforce, TTP set the framework for the discussion with a book given to every Hart student: Sharon Flake’s *The Skin I’m In*. TTP and the PTA organized a special extra Community Night where parents, school administrators, and students connected the book to Hart. Parents talked about how they support their students in the face of bullying, and administrators clarified the policies and interventions Hart uses to make sure the school is safe for all students. TTP staff also met with every Hart student in small groups to discuss Flake’s story and how students can help prevent bullying among their peers. Inspired by what they read, shared their unique talents and differences as a source of pride in the face of bullying and negativity.

**The Garfield Community Garden**

Dawn Bedminster, Garfield Elementary School’s PTA president, found inspiration for community improvement during a TTP summer learning trip to the Common Good City Farm. She envisioned an urban garden that could beautify the school grounds, enhance classroom science instruction, and create space for community building at Garfield.

Ms. Bedminster worked with Turning the Page to identify community partners, broker her ideas with school leadership, and marshal Garfield parent leaders and staff. City Year, OSSE, and a Langley Elementary School parent leader helped Ms. Bedminster and TTP plan the garden’s first phase. In May, Ms. Bedminster oversaw the construction of the garden beds and the first planting. Garfield parent leaders and Turning the Page are looking forward to supporting the Garfield Community Garden’s growth in what’s sure to be a fruitful year.
Summer Trips

During the summer months, TTP hosts trips for families from all of our partner schools to encourage summer learning and connect families to the resources and opportunities in the D.C. area. A our trip to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the National Mall, families from all of our partner schools joined to share a picnic and listen to a concert by Afro-Peruvian musician Eva Allyon. Another weekend saw us in our gardening clothes at Common Good City Farm in NW D.C. We toured the farm, learned about urban farming, and helped with a harvest! On yet another trip, the Anacostia Watershed Society took us on a boat ride down the Anacostia River, where families discovered the nature and wildlife in their backyard and learned about conservation efforts on the river and celebrated the start of the school year together. In the past, other summer trips have included a visit to the Frederick Douglass House, Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, National Portrait Gallery, and many more!

Words from our parent leaders...

“Turning the Page taught me that through our interactions we [parents] can use each other as a resource.”

“I haven't been around positive-focused parent members like this for awhile.”

“I wouldn’t be part of the PTA if it wasn’t for the Turning the Page event. It was helpful being able to commune with other people who were going through the same issues I was going through.”

“We must stand together to make a change and difference in our community.”

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