Our mission: to engage, equip, and encourage parents to partner with schools to promote their children’s success in the classroom.

**To engage:** In 2013-2014, 1,293 parents and children attended 89 workshops for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, 1st-grade, and 2nd-grade families at 6 schools. That is three times the previous year’s attendance!

**To equip:** “The workshop teacher emphasized that we should be reading to our children every day. Now my son is the one who reminds me every time, ‘Oh, Mommy, we have to read.’ Ms. Brecht said we need to do this.’ It’s been really helpful.” (Aurelie Mene, parent, Montpelier Elementary)

**Encourage parents:** “Great Start is a wonderful program. In education today there are so many changes parents need to adapt to. They have a lot of confusion about how they can truly assist their child. Great Start gives them strategies, what they should do at home to help their child. The feedback we get from everyone who attends is, ‘Thank you so much for putting this together.’ It’s not me, it’s Side By Side.” (Justin Fitzgerald, principal, Bond Mill Elementary)

**Partner with schools:** We began using the Academic Parent Teacher Team (APTT) approach, a model of parent engagement endorsed by the National Education Association. We had 123 volunteers who provided 1,141 hours of service valued at $25,730.

**Promote their children’s success:** “I came from a very poor country, Liberia. Here, children have lots of opportunities. And yet they struggle. They don’t understand what they have. If I can help them get on that journey, there’s lots of blessings that come with that. That’s my main reason for joining this program, and I love it. This program is not just helping one child, it’s helping the entire community.” (Finda Solee, volunteer, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church)
In the classroom: Kindergarten students whose parents attended at least 4 Great Start sessions averaged 35% greater progress on reading comprehension tests than students whose parents attended fewer sessions or none. Kindergarten students at Laurel Elementary, Bond Mill Elementary, and Scotchtown Hills Elementary averaged progress more than 50% greater compared to non-Great Start students!


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