

The Republican®

Editorial

Meet the parents

Thursday, June 12, 2008

Getting parents and teachers on the same page is a big challenge for schools today. So in an effort to repair the disconnect that often exists between school officials and families, the city of Springfield launched a pilot program that enables teachers to visit parents on their own turf. The program, "Parents: Stepping Up as Powerful Partners," was launched last year in 21 elementary and middle schools. It includes weekly phone calls from a parent facilitator and at least three home visits during the school year.

At the Samuel Bowles School - one of the participating elementary schools - teachers visited about 30 families in an effort to increase parent involvement and improve pupil attendance and behavior.

During a year-end celebration marking the inaugural year of the program - sponsored by the School Department, the Springfield Education Association and the faith-based Pioneer Valley project - parent Maria R. Ocasio said visits from teacher Kristin L. Burns have resulted in better grades for her 10-year-old daughter Lizmelly. Burns said her experience has also been positive. "I saw a lot of hope and dreams in their eyes for their children," she said.

Parent involvement is one of the most important factors leading to a child's success in school. This outreach program is a model that holds promise for connecting teachers and parents. We give the program an A-plus.