

# Parent Check-In/Check-Out, A Student Venture

Daniella Simari 16 May 2017



Parent Check-In/Check-Out is a small organization dedicated to streamlining communication between schools and parents by generating partnerships between schools and local grocery stores. Information booths with monthly school newsletters are placed at grocery stores for convenient parent pick-up. Parental engagement in schools is low because parents are constantly working to provide for their families. They cannot make it to their child's sporting events, let alone pick up their child after school to have a chat with a teacher. School flyers are typically shoved to the bottoms of student's backpacks, where parents can never receive information. Some families lack internet access and cannot receive school emails. Teachers are frustrated that many parents don't utilize at-home resources for their child to study from and

wish that there was a way for this information to be easily accessible.

Parent Check-In/Check-Out's mission is to improve student performance and retention through increased parental involvement and awareness. Students with involved parents, no matter their income or background, are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores as well as attend school regularly. Not *all* parents can make *all* events and place their child in *all* programs. However, knowing that these programs and events exist already sets students up for success. Families will know that there are resources to help, be it homework tips, weekly parent conferences, or after-school enrichment programs.

This organization is a student venture at Arizona State University (ASU). Its plans include heavily researching and documenting the outcome of this new communication pathway by interviewing school principals, teachers, and students about perceived parental involvement both before and three months after the information booths are implemented. Parents will be interviewed about their utilization of the newsletters and how helpful they find them, and student's grades and attendance will be monitored before and three months after the program's launch. The organization's pilot program is set up between Pueblo Del Sol (K-8) and a Los Altos Ranch Market location in Phoenix, Arizona. This principal would like to begin this program in late May before the start of summer enrichment programs within the Isaac School District. The

school plans to incur paper and printing costs, as well as the cost of the newsstand on which the papers will reside at the grocery stores. Parent volunteers will deliver newsletter copies to the stores as needed. Directors from Parent Check-In/Check-Out will request more newsletters after monitoring the newsstands weekly to determine progress. Progress will initially be recorded by counting how many newsletters were originally on the newsstand versus how many are left.

This partnership can help more than 800 school families gain access to much needed information, such as coffee chats with the principal, D.A.R.E. programs, before- and after-school tutoring, and information about consent forms. These programs and resources are valuable for school families but could be rendered meaningless if families do not engage with them. Parents who do not take advantage of these newsletters could be missing out on opportunities for their children to excel socially, emotionally, and academically. Parent Check-In/Check-Out's program will not let that happen. Students will have every opportunity that their school can afford them once their parent picks up a newsletter. School newsletters will be bilingual on the front and back, and if proven successful they could be translated into other languages, such as Armenian or Swahili for the schools' refugee populations. Many parents are worried about the language barriers preventing them from directly communicating with school administrations. Oftentimes, students are

asked to act as translators at parent-teacher conferences. This can lead to confusion or misrepresentations, since students might not translate the truth about their behavior or academic performance. School newsletters are guaranteed to have correct translations, and newsletters can list resources such as English classes for parents so that they no longer have to depend on their children to translate.

Partnerships between schools and local grocery stores have the potential to move from simple information booths to full-fledged couponing programs, where grocery stores develop a system for their partner school to receive discounts on products. For example, grocery stores can offer half-off all General Mills cereals, or two Dove deodorant sticks for the price of one to Pueblo Del Sol families. The coupons or discounts can be advertised on a sign above the information booth or directly on the back of the newsletters. School families can receive swipe cards indicating what school they belong to, and hand them to the cashier when checking out at their partner grocery store to receive full discounts. The swipe cards would be provided to families by the school with the school's logo on them. The cards' data would be a useful reference for schools to target their newsletters to the families who swipe frequently, and perhaps a tool to develop other strategies to encourage parents who are not picking up newsletters to become more involved. The hope with this part of the program is that parents are

incentivized to shop at their school's partner grocery store to not only pick up a newsletter but also use the store's discounts. These coupons are a win for the grocery store as well because more parents will be motivated to shop at their partner store thereby becoming new customers and generating new revenue for participating grocers.

To put it simply, Parent Check-In/Check-Out puts school newsletters in grocery stores. Yet, the implications of the newsletters' designated location are meaningful. By opening a direct pathway for parents to gain access to school community information, less burden will be placed on teachers, and ultimately students, to rush information to parents. Less burden will be placed on parents, who feel like they are not involved enough in their child's school community. Knowledge is powerful; and even if parents are unable to attend events, they will at least know what is happening at school and have a better understanding of the school community's culture. These newsletters are a powerful way to connect local families. Parents from other Isaac District schools can also look at Pueblo Del Sol's newsletter and develop a conversation sparked by the schools' inspirational programming communicated through its newsletters. School administrations can promote new events and advertise homework resources that aren't being utilized by all schools in the district.

One of the most important aspects of Parent Check-In/Check-Out is that no one is marginalized because of

their economic status. Some families do not have internet access or even cell phones to call school, let alone a car to drive to and from work and school every day. However, every family needs to eat. Grocery stores are a perfect place for families to plug into a community that they might not yet feel a part of. Pride in a community is essential for a community to flourish, and that pride can come from the celebration section of a school newsletter. "PDS Girls' Soccer Team to Play in Final Round of 2017 State Championship!" Or, "80% of PDS Class of 2012 Plans to Attend ASU in Fall 2016!" These accomplishments deserve to be shared with people within the community. A person's pride in their community signifies their desire to be present there, stay there, and take other great strides within the community. Pride will propel a community forward.

Parent Check-In/Check-Out plans to originate a new culture of communication for communities that lack access to what is today considered basic technological communication. It is unique in that there are no other programs like it. Its approach to communication is focused on encouraging parental engagement and involvement. Parental engagement is an issue that all schools face in some aspect, and this program aims to improve it at its most fundamental level: communication. Without this information, parents do not have a choice to be involved. Parent Check-In/Check-Out provides that choice.

# Works Cited

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## Daniella Simari Bio

**Daniella Simari is a sophomore in Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University (ASU). She currently pursuing her B.A.E. in Secondary Education-Biological Sciences with an Environmental Education Certificate of Distinction, and is the Founder and Executive Director of Parent Check-In/Check-Out. She is actively involved in on-campus organizations such as ASU's Triathlon Club Team and Page Turners, a weekly after-school reading program for elementary school students. She plans to receive her Master's Degree from the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's College in Education Administration, and hopes to one day move back home to New Jersey to work as a middle school principal.**