



Carlin Springs
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Welcome Back-to-School Picnic at Carlin Springs

The Carlin Springs staff found by moving their welcome back-to-school picnic from the school playground to a neighborhood park dramatically increased family attendance. The picnic was held on September 1, the Thursday of the staff pre-service week and focused on building stronger relationships among staff, students and families and developing deeper links to learning by having students participate in anticipatory activities for grade level units. Having the picnic at a neighborhood park greatly increased accessibility for the Carlin Springs school community. In fact, more than half of the Carlin Springs family attended.

The picnic was organized by Carlin Springs' FACE committee composed of 12 grade level teachers, specialists, administrators, and parents. They met twice last spring and then once during the pre-service week to plan the activities for the picnic and team members were assigned specific tasks to complete. Carlin Springs' families were invited to the picnic before school closed in June via robo calls and flyers and again at the conclusion of summer school.

When parents arrived, they went to their child's grade level table after checking in. There they met their children's teachers, the teacher gave each student a name tag, and the students participated in an anticipatory learning activity for a grade level unit. For example, at grade 2, the students made necklaces as an introduction to an upcoming mathematics unit on patterns. Students enjoyed these activities immensely and, as the school year progressed, grade level teachers reported that the students recalled these activities with excitement as they began the units of study they previewed at the picnic.

Another picnic highlight was helping parents and students meet other school staff, so to develop stronger school and family connections, the parents played a game created by the Carlin Springs staff called [Human Bingo \(click here to see the game\)](#) with their children.

Of course, a picnic has to have food, so the Carlin Springs FACE team used a FACE grant and community partner donations to serve a picnic lunch consisting of sandwiches, chips, and water. Next year, planning will include identifying other funding resources to ensure sufficient quantities of food because the Carlin Springs FACE team is expecting an even larger turnout!

All those attending had positive feelings about this picnic in the neighborhood. There were lots of opportunity for conversations; teachers were thrilled to meet their students before school opened and parents enjoyed meeting their children's teachers and the principal and learning more about what their children were going to study during the school year.

For more information, contact teacher Brandon Smith x6645 and School Community Coordinator Carol Sabatino at x8409.