

This year the FDES Gator PTA took on our largest Grandparent's Day event to date. We were honored to host 371 grandparents, our Gran-Gators, and 249 students for a Grandparents Luncheon on Monday, September 12. The luncheon was centered around the students' regular lunch schedule beginning just after 10:00 in the morning and lasting until 1:00 in the afternoon. Our school welcomes 1,073 students into our facility each day, which requires the extended lunch period. It was a large undertaking but with the praise received from the grandparents and the smiles on our students' faces, we feel that it was a complete success!

The PTA selected a beach theme for this event complete with sand, seaweed, buckets, shovels, and beach balls! Each table was adorned with one of several brightly colored tablecloths. We felt the bright colors added joy and excitement to the luncheon space. The centerpieces were either two small sand buckets topped with paper pinwheels or a large sand bucket holding multicolored balloons. It truly was a transformed room when we were finished with it! Children, teachers, staff, and grandparents commented on how it didn't feel like a gym and that they thought we'd transformed it into a bright and happy space for the them to enjoy their luncheon.



The gym before



The gym transformed



The "Holding Tank"

This was where grandparents could wait on their grandchild to come into the luncheon space.



The aquarium



The centerpieces for the luncheon tables.

We elected to use the school gymnasium since it is directly next door to the school cafeteria. The proximity to the cafeteria allowed us to keep classes going in and out of the lunch spaces at the same time. This prevented a loss of instructional time or a break in the students' daily routine. Parents completed an RSVP form prior to the day of the event so that we could prepare for the number of students and Gran-Gators we could expect.

Our Gators and Gran-Gators dined on a catered lunch from Raisin' Canes. Lunch for adults consisted of two large chicken strips, a side of coleslaw, a piece of Texas toast, and a choice of tea or water to drink. Our students received one large chicken strip, a fruit cup side, a piece of Texas toast, and tea or water. In order for us to enable all the "Grands" to spend as much time together as possible, we gathered 21 volunteers to help run this event. Several of those volunteers plated the food for our guests while several others served them at their table. Teachers and administrators even jumped in to help during their breaks when they saw there was a need. As you can imagine, moving 249 students and 371 grandparents in and out of a 20-minute lunch, takes a group effort.



A small handful of our many volunteers.

Monday, September 12 at Fort Dorchester Elementary was a day that not only memories were made but deeper bonds were formed between the school and the community, grandparents and grandchildren, and volunteers and staff. It was a “Grand” Day indeed and we feel so grateful to have been able to be a part of creating such a special day for everyone involved.



A few of our lovely Gran-Gators with their little Gators.



Memories Made