



## **Effective Parent Meeting**

### **Forms for parents to fill out include:**

1. Vital statistics
  - a. Names, both parents, child
  - b. Phone numbers, home, work, e-mail and cells for all
  - c. Additional contacts (grandparents, neighbours, babysitters)
2. Interests
  - a. Serving as organizer b. Chaperone
  - c. Fundraising
  3. Special skills a. Musical b. Medical
  - c. Educator
  - d. Bi-lingual - what language

### **Information Packet**

1. Goals for group
2. Names of Directors and Assistants
  - a. Contact information
    - i. Phone, school, emergency
    - ii. E-mail
    - iii. Availability at school
3. Calendar
  - a. Related to school schedule (may not be necessary for this meeting)
  - b. Related to projected event
    - i. Projected meeting dates and times ii. Practice dates and times
    - iii. Fundraising events and dates iv. Trip organization dates
1. Estimated payment dates
  - v. Paperwork needed for event
    1. ID
    2. Passport
    3. Enrolment Forms
    4. School permission forms

4. Expectations for student behaviour a. For rehearsals

i. On Time

ii. Demeanor

b. For performances

i. Uniform expectation ii. On Time

iii. Demeanour

5. It's important to set this expectation early and also to explain that you are especially appreciative to parents who have very busy schedules either with other children or with regards to competing priorities (karate, music lessons, school work, car pools, etc)

**How to boost parent attendance**

1. Vary the meeting time and day

a. Surveys are one way to discover what times best suit your population; variety is often appreciated

b. Rotate days for the meetings, Mondays, Tuesdays etc. c. Vary the hours

2. Build in a cushion before start time, 15 minutes or so allowing for late arrivers and unforeseen delays

a. Attendees can get coffee or snacks during this time (provided on site)

b. Attendees can chat and get to know one another c. Be sure everyone knows about this cushion

3. Vary the meeting place

a. Just as Tuesday night isn't necessarily the best day for meetings, neither is the school cafeteria the only place to conduct parent group business. Diverse locales, while perhaps not as central, offer other appeals. For example, South Jacksonville Elementary School in Jacksonville, Ill., meets at a skating rink; while kids skate for an hour, parents make decisions about upcoming events. The result is that attendance at the monthly meetings has increased from five people to 50

b. Some schools hold one or more gatherings a year at a local restaurant

c. Some schools hold monthly summer potluck dinner meetings at parents' homes, with the schedule set and promoted beforehand

d. Some schools hold an informal back-to-school potluck lunch in a park for its kickoff meeting in August

4. Encourage attendance as a responsibility

a. Some parents respond to direct appeals by teachers or the parent group about the importance of their presence at meetings

5. Have drop-in days where you are available for a set time and parents can drop in to discuss things

6. Make meetings more fun

a. Invite guest speakers or have students perform

i. Teachers from different grades or schools

ii. Local business people who support the school and its programs iii. Local celebrities (big and small)

b. Food helps too; snacks or even a dinner

c. Have social nights with minimum business and snacks and music d. Give door prizes or awards

e. Parents submit their child's name at each meeting. At the end of the year, there will be one drawing, with gift certificates going to one boy and one girl.

7. Offer baby-sitting and other services

- a. Make it easier for parents to attend by eliminating reasons why they can't, especially when it comes to childcare
- b. Offer translation services at meetings for parents who don't speak English
- c. Offer baby-sitting; parents baby-sit in a nearby classroom at each meeting, and that option is mentioned in all reminders

8. Make meetings shorter; everyone has busy lives, and if the meeting is drawn out, they may not attend

- a. A reputation for concise meetings might boost attendance
- b. Cut its meeting time to an hour by eliminating unnecessary discussion about details; delegate details to teams
- c. Be organized. If discussion begins throughout the meeting, encourage people to come after the meeting to can have a more in-depth conversation

9. Hold fewer meetings

- a. Find the balance of achieving your needs, building camaraderie, keeping parents involved and eliminating light content meetings

10. Combine meetings with other school events

- a. When the meetings are held in conjunction with a school event, attendance doubles or even triples
- b. Open house night
- c. Science and book fairs
- d. Simply have a presence at open house rather than holding an actual meeting. The group sets up a table where parents can fill out a survey about their own ideas or sign up to volunteer
- e. Another event such as a dinner, cakewalk, or performances by the choir and band f. A shortened meeting immediately preceding school concerts. It gets a lot of people updated, but no discussion is generated. It's an effective form of announcing things

11. Publicize

- a. Parents with full appointment books need a heads-up about meeting dates b. Triple Communicate: Email Them. Mail Them. Call Them
- c. Listed on a school calendar and on the school sign d. Send out reminders a week or two ahead of time
- e. Be sure to list the time and place of all scheduled meetings in every communication
- f. Publicize meeting dates through a newsletter, web site, school calendar, and district TV station
- g. Send e-mail
- h. On the day of a meeting, send reminders home with students

## The Meeting Itself

1. Welcome them
  - a. Have someone on your staff at the door greeting them as they enter the room and hand them the information you are going to cover
2. Create a good environment
  - a. Easy music over the sound system (Turn off when meeting starts)
  - b. Make sure the room you are in is clear of distractions c. Be sure you can be heard
  - d. Do you have a microphone? Does it work?
  - e. Arrange seating for easy participation:
    - i. Semicircular ii. Circular
    - iii. Groupings for teams
3. Have a plan
  - a. Communicate it clearly, and ask for questions b. Remember you are there to be informative
  - c. Be engaging, but leave your jokes for the students. Parents want the details
4. The Tough Question: The tough question is going to happen
  - a. While not all tough questions are asked with bad intent, it may seem they are b. Assume good intent on every parent question
  - c. Respond calmly about whatever the issue is; focus on the issue at hand not the individual
  - d. Repeat areas you may have covered, parents may have missed it or misunderstood it
  - e. Encourage discussion if the issue is unclear
  - f. Say, "that is a great question, let me think about it and I will respond to you tomorrow."
  - g. Remember, you don't know everything, and you don't have to!
  - h. Answer what you can and get the other answers later
5. Summarize the content of the meeting
  - a. Repeat any assignments
  - b. Repeat any deadlines
  - c. Repeat any expected actions
  - d. Remind the group of the next meeting location and date. (Set it if you have not already)

6. Be available

- a. Following the meeting make yourself available to meet parents or follow up with questions

7. Follow up

- a. Email it

- b. YouTube it c. Website it d.

Facebook it

- e. Have someone record what you say, write it down, and then send it out. This will allow you to be clear in what information you cover. The parents will love it when they are trying to remember.

***Bon Voyage!***

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