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Open House



Open House

An open house is an opportunity to convey to parents the fact that their children’s success in school depends a lot on what goes on at home. By discussing the Compact and the homework guidelines, families will learn what they can do to help their children succeed.

This is a perfect time to explain programs for parents and families.

Open Houses/All-School Events

List below the times in a school year that all families are invited to the school for programs such as open houses, back-to-school nights, and other all-school activities. Do not include parent-teacher-student conferences.

Event	Approximate Date

For one of the key events above, develop a plan for:

- Discussing the Compact
- Discussing the homework guidelines
- Discussing learning standards
- Explaining parent and family programs

Use the form on the next page as a worksheet for your plans.

Plan for Open Houses (or Similar Events)

School: _____ District: _____

Event: _____ Approximate Date: _____

How will we discuss the Compact? _____

How will we discuss the homework guidelines? _____

How will we acquaint parents with learning standards? _____

How will we explain programs for parents and families? _____

Decide who will do what, what materials will be needed, and how students might be involved. Use your imagination for creative ways to communicate with families.

Notes



Resources for Open House

The following information is from *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (pp. 53-54).

Smaller Is Better

Sometimes, school-wide events such as open houses can feel like cattle drives. Families are herded into the building, go through their paces, and leave without ever talking to someone long enough to make a real connection. Consider breaking down big events into smaller ones that are more inviting and less intimidating.

- Class meetings, grade-level socials, book groups, clubs, and other activities offer opportunities for small group conversations. For ESL families, offer interpreters or special activities in their home language.
- Back to school nights can be spread out over a week, with one grade per night.
- One-to-one interactions, such as informal conversations on the school grounds and home visits by parents or staff, can build deep personal connections.
- A family center provides a place where small groups of parents can gather spontaneously or meet with school staff. (Make sure it's in a handicapped-accessible area of the school.) The center can be the home base of the family-school coordinator.
- The school library is open at night for families to use and take classes.

Henderson, Anne T., Mapp, Karen L., Johnson, Vivian, R., & Davies, Don. (2007). *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*. New York, NY: The New Press.



More Resources for Open House

The following information is from *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (pp. 87-88).

Class Meeting

Class meetings allow time for teachers and parents to learn from each other. They can be special events or part of open houses and back-to-school nights. Instead of discussing rules of behavior or filling out emergency forms, talk about your approach to teaching and ask families to brainstorm ways they can support their kids. Encourage discussions. Nuts-and-bolts information, such as class schedules and school supply lists, can be covered in handouts. Use the time to build relationships.

Class meetings that follow can cover specific subjects and raise expectations. Consider devoting one meeting each to showing how you teach reading, writing, and math. Explain an assignment and give parents their students' work. What standard did the assignment address? Show them the scoring guide you used and ask them to assess the work using the guide. Welcome hard questions: "What does this standard mean? How does this assignment reflect that standard? How do grades relate to standards?" Then talk about how parents can use scoring guides to discuss student work at home.

Around midyear, ask parents what they think is going well in terms of their children's learning. Ask if their children are having any problems or other concerns. Compare this to your experience in the classroom. Finally, ask parents what you could do to help them work with their children.

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More Resources for Open House

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A six-step agenda for a back-to-school night class meeting

Give parents name tags and ask them to sit at their child's seat. Then they can see the classroom from their child's perspective – and get to know more about their children's friends.

1. Ask parents to talk about their favorite teachers and what was special about them. Make a list of the main points.
2. Talk about why you became a teacher. Describe your qualifications and training to teach the class.
3. Express your vision of teaching. What kind of teacher are you? What is the role of students in your classroom? How will you encourage a love of learning? What skills and knowledge will your students gain over the year? Ask parents if this is different from when they were in school.
4. Discuss how you will help students who are struggling and challenge students who learn quickly. Describe your commitment to making sure that every student does well.
5. Do a mini-demonstration of a lesson you have taught in this class.
6. Explain that you will stay in touch with parents about student progress. When and how can parents contact you with questions or concerns?

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