

EDUCATION

Parent Volunteers

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Building Student Success within a Strong School Community ®

Parent/Family Volunteers

Studies have shown that parents and family members who volunteer convey confidence in the schools they serve and at the same time send a message to the students that they care about both the school and the students. If parents were viewed by the school as they are viewed by their community, the school would see a pool of potential volunteers from clerical support to technology specialists; gardeners to craftsmen; musicians, artists, environmentalists, business professionals, and humanitarians. Putting the expertise of parents to use in the school provides support to educators and administrators and offers a meaningful and productive use of parental talent. Having knowledge of the specific talents and interests of the parent resource pool can serve to benefit the school and strengthen parental involvement.

School volunteers need not be restricted to serving the school only during school hours. Good planning can create task lists that can be completed at home, before school, after school, or during evening school activities.

Using the Parent/Family Resource Pool

Make a Wish List – Every organization, business, and industry has that nagging task list that, if accomplished with regularity, would inject relief and optimism into an overwhelmed staff and allow regular staff to focus on their primary functions. Perhaps you would like an office volunteer to greet visitors, answer the phone, and make photocopies. Maybe your wish list includes a volunteer gardener to relieve the custodial staff of seasonal grounds keeping – or snow removal. Maybe you need a carpenter to head up the set building crew for your school play or a seamstress to help with costumes. Maybe your teachers just need an extra set of hands in the classrooms. Maybe you need a volunteer to organize and manage your volunteer program. Make a note of these tasks and list them by category.

Conduct a Survey - Before you can dip into the parent resource pool, you need to know what resources you have and when they are available. The best way to reveal this information is to ask. Take time to develop a brief survey for parents. Items to include in the survey might be:

- Parent's contact information
- Best times to call
- Areas of expertise (Offer categories as possible choices)
- Hobbies and other interests (Offer categories as possible choices)
- Areas in which they are willing to volunteer (Offer categories as possible choices)
- Hours available to volunteer
- Allow space for comments
- Offer "Other" as a category choice

Create a Volunteer File or Database

Information is of no use if it can't be easily accessed. Convert this volunteer information into a resource by storing it in a database or spreadsheet. If you don't know how to build a database, check your parent volunteer surveys. Chances are that your surveys may reveal the name of an individual who has experience in office software applications. Not only might this person assist in building a database, they could also show your staff how to use it. Your parent resource pool database could also prove to be useful in planning a "Career Day."

Develop Volunteer Orientation

Time training volunteers is time well spent. Present the volunteer with a clear job description and a packet of printed information for future reference. Items that might be included in the packet are listed:

- Volunteer agreement
- Job description

- Volunteer schedule
- Volunteer welcome letter
- Parking information
- Building map
- Operating instructions on applicable equipment
- Emergency evacuation plan
- School handbook and calendar

Use orientation time to familiarize your volunteers with the school's mission, programs, policies, and procedures and to tour the building. Emphasize the importance of a welcoming environment at the school and express how the volunteer is expected to contribute to that friendly environment. Other things to discuss in the orientation might include:

- A place to sign in and record hours
- A safe place to keep personal belongings
- Location of supplies
- Familiarize them with equipment related to the volunteer position
- Introduction to regular staff members with whom they will work
- Review school policies and procedures
- Thank them for their willingness to volunteer at the school

Note that background checks will most likely be required for volunteers who will be interacting with students in the school.

While parent volunteers can fill many needs in the school, community organizations and businesses should not be overlooked as potential resources and partners. A community resource pool can nicely complement existing elements in your parent resource pool. Service organizations are often looking for projects in which to invest manpower and money, and businesses are often willing to share with the community in productive ways. School administrators should capitalize on the purpose of service organizations and entice the interest of local businesses in their communities by simply expressing (in a personal format) what the school could use in the way of manpower and amenities, showing potential partners how such interaction can be a win-win situation, dialoguing about roles and expectations, and maintaining open communication.

Resources for Parent/Family Volunteers	
The following information is from <i>Beyond the Bak</i> <i>Partnerships</i> , by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. M. 308-310, with minor updates added by ADI).	U
This survey was designed by East Boston High School to ute and what would encourage them to come to the school	
Dear Families:	
(Name of school) and its Family Center are conducting ultimate goal of improving your student's and family's	
Parent's Name Stude	nt's Name
Address	
Phone # E-mail addre	288
Work phone, cell phone, etc.	Prefer to text?
What are the best times for you to come to the school?	
□ Mornings □ Afternoons □ Evenings □ Weekend	ls
(Name of School) encourages parent involvement. Wou school?	ld you like to be involved with the
If yes, check what you would feel comfortable doing:	
\Box Make phone calls to other parents \Box Classroo	m speaker/assistant
\Box Help out in the offices or library \Box Attend f	eld trips
\Box Work on important school topics \Box Join scho	ool site council
□ Help plan events □ Other	
Is there anything that prevents you from becoming invo □ Getting excused from work, work hours	
□ Transportation issues □ Other	□ Interpretation needed
Do you know how much time high school students show What do you think is the correct answer?* □ 1 hour □ 1 1/2 hours □ 2 1/2 hours	
, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	
Are you worried about your son or daughter passing th	
What do you need to know about the state test?	
Students and families have many talents. What say up	u share with (name of School)?
Students and families have many talents. What can ye	
\Box Sewing \Box Trade skills (such as carpentry)	1
□ Other	
What is your opinion of (name of school)?	
what is your opinion of (name of school)?	

Would you like to be notified of various meetings and events? Yes No	
What is the best way to notify you? \Box Call on the phone \Box Text on the phone \Box E-mail	
□ Mail a letter home □ Put notices on school website □ Put notices in the newspaper	
Do you mind if you are called at work for these notices?	
□Yes, call me □No, not at work	
Work telephone number	
Best time to reach you at home	
If the school offered classes, what would you be interested in?	
□ Computers □ General education	
□ English as a Second Language □ College/advanced level courses	
□ Job skills (interviewing, resume writing)	
□ How to help my student succeed at school	
□ Parent training (such as Leadership Academy, Title I workshops, other workshops)	
□ Other	
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please return to the homeroom teacher or mail/email to: (Family Center Coordinator's name, address of school, telephone number, email)	
* The correct time is hours. (East Boston High recommends 2/12 hours.) If you do not see your student spending time on homework, ask both the student and the teacher why. The school administration needs to know if there is a problem with students not doing homework or	

teachers not giving it/correcting it.

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.

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