



Encouraging Participation in Parent Meetings

Meetings need to be enjoyable, interesting, and valuable.

Try some of the suggestions below to make your meeting fit this description.

Greetings

Have someone greet parents warmly at the door when they arrive. You may ask one of the parents who attends regularly to do this in a relaxed fashion.

Refreshments are "key" to a popular meeting. Everyone likes to eat and food is the foundation for a comfortable social event. Have variety for individual tastes.

Provide some interesting written information to give the uncomfortable parent something to do. Children's art work or a recipe are fun to look at and are non-threatening.



Making Parents Comfortable

Make the room attractive.
Provide comfortable chairs



and have the room organized in a way that parents can interact easily.

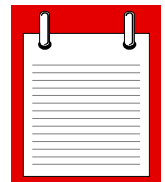
Start and end on time. Parents make changes in their plans to attend and activities that stray from the original plan may discourage parents from attending.



Build in time for socializing. Fun icebreakers can give parents the opportunity to meet others and set the stage for a comfortable meeting ahead. Ice breakers should take from 5-10 minutes.

Running the Meeting

Use a flip chart to focus parent's attention; this allows for better understanding. Writing down what parents say makes them feel valued.



Start your meeting with announcements, then move to the agenda. Have the agenda in clear view and review it and follow it. Ask parents what they would add to the agenda for future meetings.

A project of The Florida Partnership for Parent Involvement

Center of Excellence ♦ Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute ♦ Florida's Children's Forum
Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters ♦ Hillsborough County Head Start ♦ Hillsborough County Even Start

Have the group come up with some ground rules such as keeping information confidential, being respectful of others, not interrupting, etc.

Have a separate piece of chart paper near by to write down any additional items that come up throughout the meeting that don't really pertain to the focus. This will be addressed at a later time or meeting.

Balance the task (why we are here) with the process (how the points are getting accomplished). Make sure the group has enough time to process and discuss the points being made by using personal examples and experiences, but staying on the focus of the meeting.

Empower your parents. Allow them to sign up to present topics or chair meetings. Encourage them to select topics that interest them and to choose the best times to hold meetings. You may have to hold each meeting twice in order to reach more parents. If parents are chairing the meeting, then less staff may need to be present.

For more information contact:



The Center for Parent Involvement (FCPI) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education; Goals 2000, Educate America Act from 1994-1999. Guided by an advisory board of parents and professionals, the FCPI's goal was to tap the power of parents.

The FCPI gathered information on parent needs, coordinated the information, and created a series of resources organized by theme, including fact sheets for parents and professionals, "Beyond the Basics" resources, and resource identification lists. Many of the resources have been translated into Spanish language versions, and every effort has been made to preserve the meaning and flavor of the original English documents. This series of materials provides a wealth of current information for both parents and providers; the complete set of resources can be obtained in PDF format on the Department of Child and Family Studies Website at www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi. The staff of the FCPI are hopeful that their work will continue to help children get ready to learn for many years to come.

The series' themes include:

- Family Empowerment
- Parent Involvement
- Parenting Support
- School Readiness
- Violence in the Lives of Children
- Transition to Kindergarten

The Center was one component of a project led by Hillsborough County Center of Excellence in collaboration with the Department of Child & Family Studies at USF's de la Parte Institute and the Florida Children's Forum. Other project partners include HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), Hillsborough County Head Start and Hillsborough County Even Start. For more information about these projects, call 813.974.4612.

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