The purpose of most meetings is to share and exchange information. Some of the most important elements of ANY successful meeting are listed below. Also included are comments directly related to the Ways Busy Parents Can Help Children Succeed on Standardized Tests presentations.

1. **Determine a clear focus for your meeting.** Don’t discuss things at the meeting that can be handled by a letter sent home to parents, a notice in your monthly newsletter or information included on your school website.

   *Remember that the focus of this parent meeting is Ways busy parents can help children succeed on standardized tests. Don’t use valuable time discussing next month’s fund-raiser. School staff are busy and so are parents. Everyone will appreciate a focused agenda.*

2. **Announce the date, time and location of the meeting well in advance.** Use a variety of ways to inform everyone of your upcoming event.

   *Try to reach as many parents as possible—this affects all of them. Reproducible invitations to send home to parents and a sample press release to inform the community are included in your kit in Section 7. Use them as is or as idea starters to help your staff get the word out about the upcoming meeting.*

3. **Prepare the meeting agenda and objectives in advance.** Have a written agenda available for presenters. In some cases you may want to provide a printed agenda for the meeting participants, as well.

   *It helps to have a clear understanding of what the meeting agenda includes. For example:*  
   - Refreshments
   - Welcome
   - Introductions
   - Presentation
   - Distribution of handouts
   - Discussion
   - Evaluation

4. **Start promptly and stay within the specified time frame.** Remember Parkinson’s Law: “Work expands to fill the time available.”

   *You are busy. Parents are busy. Hosting a meeting that sticks to the schedule will ensure good parent attendance at future meetings.*

5. **Designate someone to take careful notes during the meeting, especially regarding follow-up actions to be taken, time lines and people to be involved. Distribute copies to your meeting committee as soon after the meeting as possible.*

   *Consider asking a staff member to take notes during the meeting discussion period. Then provide copies to participants following the meeting.*
Tests have always been part of going to school and these days, students get tested a lot. There are school readiness tests, placement tests, standardized tests, and regular classroom tests. So, why are students tested so much? Because tests tell educators:

- How much students are learning,
- How schools are performing.
Here is the suggested agenda:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Welcome; introduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>View the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Distribute meeting handouts (found at end of this Leader’s Guide).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 to 10</td>
<td>Open Discussion Topic #1. Participants select their top priority idea to discuss from the handout summarizing the main points from the opening presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Looking at the summary handout of main ideas from today’s presentation, which single suggestion do you feel would most help you improve your child’s study habits?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invite parents to think for a moment, looking at the handout summarizing the key points of the presentation, and then share the suggestion they selected. Take about one (1) minute to reach agreement on the top idea. Try to include every parent in the discussion. Then talk about why the suggestion is so important and how parents can carry it out at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The objective is to get parents to discuss what they can do to carry out the idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 to 10</td>
<td>Discuss Topic #2 (a guided open discussion). Meeting leader selects discussion questions for an idea discussed in the presentation that has not already been discussed in topic #1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>See “Suggested Discussion Questions” for each of the main ideas presented in the presentation (following this agenda).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask a question—or questions—to start the discussion about the idea you have selected from the presentation and try to get as many parents as possible to participate in the discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Optional for 45-min. mtg. only) 8 to 10</td>
<td>Optional additional Open Discussion Topic #3. As in Open Discussion Topic #2 above, meeting leader selects questions to discuss about another priority suggestion in the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Closing comments, evaluation &amp; adjourn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 45 min.</td>
<td>Total time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research shows that parent involvement is a key factor in a student’s success in school. But how do you get busy parents to attend?

1. Get the word out!

Include specific information about your meeting, the time, the date and the location. Try putting the message:

- In articles in your school newsletter.
- On your website.
- In emails to parents.
- In notes sent home in weekly folders.
- On your school’s outdoor sign.
- In your local newspaper.
- On your local radio station.
- On flyers posted and distributed at your public library.

2. Involve parents in the planning

Who are the experts on getting parents to attend meetings at your school? Other parents! Invite them to be on the planning committee for your meeting. They can take charge of the following tasks:

- **Publicity.** Ask one parent to head up a group to get the word out. Provide technical support for using the internet and developing creative graphics. Provide a list of contacts at your local newspaper, the radio station, the library, etc.

- **Food.** Ask one parent to head up a committee to prepare and provide food. Make sure they know about how many people to expect and what support your school kitchen staff can provide.

- **Set up and take down.** Get a group of parents to help set up and take down the meeting area so you’ll be ready for regular school activities the next day.

- **Parking.** Ask parents to help monitor parking. Make sure you have adequate outside lighting for an evening meeting.

- **Support.** Ask parents to help with copying and distributing handouts, setting up and running media presentations, and distributing and collecting evaluations.

- **Greeting.** Post parents at each entrance to welcome new parents as they enter the building. Have enough at each entrance that one could actually walk a new family into the meeting and make some introductions.