

Succeed in School

Send a letter to parents

Some parents may respond more favorably to a detailed letter inviting them to your event. A Microsoft® Word version of this letter, which you can adapt to your needs, is available on the CD included in your binder.

Braddock Road School

Dear Parents,

How can we help your child succeed in school?
By working together!

Research shows that children whose parents continue to be involved in their education are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores.
- Pass their classes, earn credits and be promoted.
- Attend school regularly.
- Complete homework.
- Graduate and go on to further education.

Do you want to know more about how you can be involved with your child's learning? Join us for a special program. We'll have a presentation discussing practical ways parents can help their children succeed in school. We'll also have handouts with activities you can do at home to promote learning and school success.

Please come to learn more about *Ways Busy Parents Can Help Children Succeed in School!*

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Sincerely,



Involve 'hard-to-reach' parents

Research shows that when parents are involved in their children's education, *all* children do better in school, regardless of the age of the child, the parent's educational level or even the family's socioeconomic status. But educators say that more often than not, it's the same group of parents who attend every school event—and usually their children are not the ones who need the most help.

Many parents are so exhausted, working long hours and multiple jobs, that it is exceedingly difficult for them to attend parent events. Still, the stakes are high. The secret is to be available, creative, understanding—and to adapt. To encourage those hard-to-reach parents to attend your meeting:



- **Send meeting invitations to all parents**, even if you know some are unlikely to attend. Provide food to make the event more social and informal. Have school staff outside the school greet parents as they arrive. And remember the essentials of child care and transportation.
- **Make parents feel welcome at school.** The school principal must set the tone, with follow-up from the whole staff. Print school signs in all languages spoken by students and parents. Remember that no matter what the culture, “People don’t care how much you *know*; they want to know how much you *care*.”
- **Take your meeting to parents.** Community centers, church basements, restaurants and businesses are often delighted to provide space for parent meetings.
- **Consider alternate meeting times.** The typical 6 p.m. meeting may not be the most convenient for hard-to-reach parents. Host a “breakfast meeting” in the morning and serve coffee and light breakfast snacks. Hold an abbreviated version of your meeting during lunch so that parents can attend on lunch hour. Encourage parents to bring brown bag lunches. Or even consider an “afternoon tea” time—ask parents to stop by during the afternoon to view your presentation and provide tea and cookies.
- **Follow up after parents attend your meeting**—a call to say thanks for attending, a note to say thanks for helping.

Don't give up if your initial response is not overwhelming. Parent involvement takes time. Be willing to try new approaches to increase the attendance of hard-to-reach parents. Read about successful ideas used by other schools.

Succeed in School

Make learning a habit in just 21 days

The best way to ensure your child is learning every day is to make a habit of it. Research shows that it takes only 21 days to create a lifelong habit—so here are 21 simple activities you can do with your child at home to promote school success. Try at least one activity every day for 21 days. After 21 days, you will have created a learning habit that will last a lifetime!

- 1 **Have a family “Read-In.”** Gather your family in a cozy room. Everyone brings a favorite book or magazine. After 30 minutes or so of reading, allow each family member to read aloud to the others.
- 2 **Cook dinner together.** Make each family member responsible for one part of the meal. Cooking reinforces important math skills, such as fractions and measurements.
- 3 **Organize family photos.** Gather some family photos and let your child organize them into albums. She’s practicing sorting and classifying as she searches for pictures with common themes.
- 4 **Write a letter to a family member.** Your child can write about anything—school, sports, a book he has read. He will strengthen his writing skills and make a member of your family feel special!
- 5 **Read age-appropriate poetry together.** It will improve your child’s listening, vocabulary and sense of timing. Let your child experiment with writing her own poems.
- 6 **Discuss the five W’s and H—Who, What, Where, When, Why and How.** After watching the news together or reading a newspaper article, challenge your child to write down the five W’s and H of the story.
- 7 **Have fun with puzzles.** Start with easy ones and work up to challenging ones as your family improves. Doing puzzles teaches logic and enhances spatial skills.
- 8 **Have a geography bee.** Where in the world is ... Madagascar? Prague? Easter Island? Or use local geography and landmarks—is school next to a pond or the woods? Check your answers with globes and maps.
- 9 **Make lists.** Tell your child what you need from the store and have her write it down. Not only will this give her practice writing, it will help her develop a sense of responsibility. Suggest she make her own “to-do” lists.
- 10 **Make a craft challenge.** It will create a sense of resourcefulness in your child and build responsibility. Ask your child to reuse items around the house for a project. He can decorate grocery bags to create gift-wrap, for example, or cover a can to make a pencil holder.
- 11 **Review math facts with a deck of cards.** Have your child remove all of the jokers and face cards. Now deal the cards—half to you, half to your child. Turn over two cards. Add them together (or multiply them). The person with the highest sum takes all four cards. Go through the entire deck. The person with the most cards at the end is the winner.



Provide a parent resource center

A parent resource center (PRC) is a room or area of your school or district that is stocked with information for parents and offers opportunities for parents to learn how to support their child's education. It can play a key role in promoting student achievement through parent involvement. And it's an ideal way to make parents feel welcome and comfortable in your school. Here are some suggestions for setting up and maintaining a PRC. If you already have a PRC, use these ideas to evaluate your program.



Set up a PRC

Recruit parents and teachers to serve on a planning committee. Have the group:

- **Work with your district or state Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC).** You will find a list of state PIRCs posted by The National PIRC Coordination Center at www.nationalpirc.org. Click on "PIRC Directory."
- **Determine a budget.** Work with school, district and state advisors. Consider asking business partners to help underwrite expenses.
- **Find a space.** If possible, house your PRC in a special room in your building, easily accessible for parents. If no space is available, find a corner of the library or even the cafeteria. Otherwise, consider an off-site location or a mobile unit.
- **Identify items and resources needed for the space.** These may include basic items like a table, chairs, shelves, file cabinets, a coffee pot, cups, lamps, a phone, a computer and a DVD player, along with resources like pamphlets, booklets, DVDs, computer programs, books, magazines, lists of community contacts and forms.
- **Assess how you will staff your center.** Will your PRC have a paid coordinator? Will you have a volunteer or a rotating team of volunteers? Will you need to train volunteers to work in the center?
- **Set a schedule.** When do you want your parent resource center to open? Work backwards from that date entering "due dates" for all the tasks that will need to be completed before you can open the doors. Also consider the days and times you will have the center available for parents.

Provide services in your PRC

Some traditional services and resources offered by a PRC include:

- **Parenting classes or workshops.** Use a survey to see which topics would appeal most.
- **Support groups.** Some parents in your school community may have special concerns and would welcome support from a trained facilitator and a support group of parents.

- **Computer training.**
- **A hotline.** Offer a hotline manned by teachers and other school staff or trained parent volunteers.
- **Workshops.** Parents who might not attend an all-school parent night may participate in a more specialized workshop.
- **A lending library.** Include books, magazines, DVDs, audio CDs, brochures on community agencies, and pamphlets on parenting topics. (The Parent Institute offers a variety of products for your resource center. See the marketing information in the folder at the back of your binder. All Parent Institute products are available in both English and Spanish.)



Keep your PRC up to date

Once your parent resource center is set up and offering services for parents:

- **Apply for grants.** Does your school or district have an expert on applying for grants who can help you? If not, check with your state PIRC. Visit www.nationalpirc.org and click on "PIRC Directory."
- **Go mobile.** Stock a van for a day and tour a neighborhood. Notify parents in advance that you will be coming and that you'll have helpful resources they can take home. Mention that you'll have staff on board to answer questions. If your time is limited, announce that the van will be parked in the lot of a local shopping area.
- **Start a Parent Advisory Council.** Host meetings in your PRC. This group can plan events for parents and suggest needed services.
- **Find resources for the coordinator and volunteers.** Enroll them in training and other workshops. Check out the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education at www.ncpie.org.
- **Accommodate all parents.** Provide resources in all the languages of your parents. Be open during hours that accommodate those who work long hours. Be prepared to work with parents of special needs children. Be aware of cultural expectations.
- **Evaluate your PRC.** It's important to make sure the PRC is meeting the needs of parents. Create a form that can be used for yearly evaluations.