

Parent Night FAQ's



What is Parent Night?

Parent Night is an event you host in your own classroom to share information with the parents of your students. Parent Night meetings generally last about an hour and give you time to explain your policies and procedures. Parents will also have time to ask questions, although this is not a time for individual conferences.

How is Parent Night different from PTA Open House?

Many Open House events are drop-by meetings or very brief sessions in which you give an overview of your class or grade level expectations. Because many families have more than one child, PTA events have to be this way so parents can visit multiple teachers on one night. However, turn out is often low because parents know that the meetings are so brief that they really won't have an opportunity to have their questions and concerns addressed.

What are the benefits of offering a Parent Night?

Even though Parent Nights take a little work to plan and organize, they actually save you time in the long run. Instead of having to explain your procedures over and over again to parents during individual conferences, you can share this information early in the year all at one time. Having a Parent Night will cut down on the number of individual conferences needed, and it will shorten the length of the conferences you do have later.

How should I structure the Parent Night meeting?

You may want to provide overall structure to the meeting by creating a PowerPoint presentation that outlines your agenda. Don't make the pages too wordy - just list topics that you want to discuss. As you move through the presentation, you'll be prompted to discuss important issues and you'll be less likely to get sidetracked with parents' questions. Provide time at the end of the presentation to answer questions. To make the presentation more engaging and interesting, take digital photos of your class during the weeks before the meeting and include them in your slides. If time allows, you can engage the parents and children in a simple activity such as a math center game or a cooperative learning activity. If you have a Smartboard or other advanced technology in your room, be sure to demonstrate it so parents will understand how technology impacts the classroom experience. Most of all, respect the fact that parents are busy people and keep the meeting to one hour or less.

What topics should I plan to cover?

Think about the most important topics that come up repeatedly during parent conferences, and cover those topics in your presentation. Include ways that they can help their children be successful at home. For ideas, see the list of possible topics on the next page.

How can I boost attendance at Parent Night?

You'll find that more parents attend Parent Night than a regular PTA Open House because they know that you will be discussing specific classroom policies and procedures. But you can also boost attendance by trying these:

- A few weeks before the event, send a letter home with each student and require a response, even if the parent can't attend. If you don't require a response and hold your students accountable, many parents will never know about the event.
- Send out emails to parents informing them of the event.
- Plan the event for the early evening when it's convenient for parents to attend. I've found that 6:00 p.m. works well.
- Plan the event for the day before you are going to send home midterm progress reports. Tell parents they can get the progress report early if they attend the meeting!
- Or plan the event for a day or two **AFTER** you send home progress reports. The level of concern may be much higher at that point!
- Provide light refreshments such as crackers and pretzels along with a beverage. Remember that some parents will attend right after work and may not have time to have supper first.
- Ask parents to bring their child with them to the meeting, and offer a "free homework" night for those who attend. You don't want them to leave the meeting and still have to supervise homework later.
- Offer a homework pass or bonus points on a test to those students who have at least one parent attend.
- Have your students create an art display or plan to present a skit or song of some kind on Parent Night. Students and parents are more likely to attend if they are involved in some way.
- On the day of the meeting, send home a reminder on brightly-colored paper. A half-page flyer is fine, but be sure to send something home.



Suggested Topics for Parent Night



General Information

- Daily class schedule including lunch and special classes
- Homework policies and procedures
- Local attendance policies
- Grading methods and policies for dealing with late assignments
- Use of Student Planners or Homework Logs
- School or class webpage
- General grade level expectations
- Upcoming field trips or events
- Class Wish List - items needed for the class
- Statewide achievement tests and expectations
- Organization and study skills
- Opportunities for parents to volunteer in the classroom or share a special skill with the class

Academic Areas:

- **Literacy** - Literacy Block, Literature Circles, Home Reading Logs, SSR time, Writing instruction, Spelling assignments, Accelerated Reading program, Media Center use
- **Math** - Importance of mastering math facts fluently, Accelerated Math program, use of calculators, Daily Math Puzzler program, problem solving, Mastery Learning
- **Science** - Topics of study, integration into other subjects, take-home activities such as Science Buddies program
- **Social Studies** - Topics of study, special projects

Parent Resources

- **Helpful websites** (www.mathfactcafe.com, www.bookadventure.com, www.nimblefingers.com, etc.)
- **Special Programs** - Information about programs such as tutoring opportunities or other assistance that may be available at school or in the community