



Boulder Valley Schools

BEST IDEAS

for Parent Involvement in Education

Acknowledgements

The Boulder Valley PTA is pleased to offer this booklet of best ideas for school administrators, teachers and all parent organizations to reference.

Becky Karch, Boulder Valley PTA President, coordinated the project, with the help of **Dr. George Garcia**, Superintendent of Boulder Valley Schools. Other Boulder Valley PTA members who contributed were **Marylou Harrison, Mary Witte, Judith Houlding, Robin Duclos, and Dr. Sheri Williams**.

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Preface

Parental involvement is key to successfully educating our children and youth in public schools. When teachers and parents work in partnership, students usually do well in school. Parents provide the foundation for learning at home before the youngster enters school, and continued support during the child's school career generally results in school success. But parental involvement can extend outside the home into the school and the classroom. BVSD encourages parental involvement in all phases of schooling because we believe that not only will the individual child benefit, but the entire school will be more effective in its primary mission of teaching and learning. This booklet provides an overview of best practices in our district of parents working in partnership with their schools. We hope you find them useful and applicable to your program. We believe these practices make a difference in the education of our children.

George F. García, ED. D.
Superintendent of Schools

In this booklet you'll find ideas for parent involvement activities and events shared by many BVSD schools, the benefits of which are organized according to the National Standards for Parent Involvement. These standards appear in the current "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) legislation, and were developed from over 30 years of research by the National PTA in cooperation with education and parent involvement professionals through the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE). It is our hope that the sharing of ideas related to the Parent Involvement Standards will help you identify ways to promote this kind of participation in your school community. Take a look at the Parent Involvement programs currently implemented in your school. Talk about ways to incorporate all of the standards into each event. Use the blue *National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs* (May 1998) booklet that was distributed to all Boulder Valley schools, or go to the PTA website at www.pta.org for more information on quality indicators for successful programs.

Becky Karch
Boulder Valley PTA

National Standards for Parent Involvement

- Standard I **Communicating**—Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- Standard II **Parenting**—Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- Standard III **Student Learning**—Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Standard IV **Volunteering**—Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- Standard V **School Decision Making and Advocacy**—Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Standard VI **Collaborating with Community**—Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families and student learning.

Your programs should cover all of these standards for the biggest impact. Take a look at your school's current programs to see what you can do to increase Parent Involvement.

The six standards should be implemented together so that they have a synergistic effect, each multiplying the effects of the others. Together they are most effective and deliver the most powerful impact.

From the National PTA's *Building Successful Partnerships: A Guide for Developing Parent and Family Involvement Programs* (2000) Author: Dr. James P. Comer, which is available through the National PTA website at www.pta.org.

Best Ideas

Escuela Bilingue
Pioneer Elementary
101 Baseline Rd.
Lafayette, CO 80026
(303) 666-4971

Contact: JoAnne
Haislip

PACT—Parents and Children Together

Brief Description

Parent Information & Idea Sheets are handed out to all parents. For example, one information sheet covered how to dress your children properly for winter. It included “winter dressing” activities that parents could do with their children at home, such as building and dressing an outdoor snowman, creating a paper snowman then dressing him appropriately, “lacing” paper mittens, and making healthy snowman cracker snacks using various foods as “clothing”. Some of the activities tied into things that were being done in the classrooms at the different grade-levels. The information sheets also suggested books that parents could read with their children.

Benefits

Communicating

- Provides information about school policies and expectations.

Parenting

- Communicates the importance of positive relationships between parents and their children.
- Provides an interactive way of teaching families about important health and safety topics

Student Learning

- Allows parents to participate in their child’s education
- Develops the home-school relationship

“Extra Eyes” Program

Brief Description

The Aspen Creek K-8 PTA set up an information desk in the school’s front lobby, and trained parent volunteers to keep an “extra eye” on the children in school.

The information desk welcomes parents as they enter the school. It is staffed by parent volunteers who offer school tours, information about the school, welcome packets for new families, and information about various PTA activities. The desk also doubles as a check-in point for people entering the building to ensure that everyone signs in and receives an identification badge. When no volunteers are at the desk, signs tell visitors to check in at the office.

Parents also commit time before and after school, during lunch and playground times. These parents are trained by the Broomfield Police Department about suspicious activity and how to act quickly when necessary to help keep children safe. Trained parents are strategically placed around the school building and the school grounds during key times.

Benefits

Communicating

- Disseminates information about school safety policies and school goals, and includes parents in the decision-making process.

Volunteering

- Creates a climate in which parents feel valued and welcome.
- Creates additional opportunities for parents to volunteer outside the classroom.

Collaborating With Community

- Develops partnership with a community agency, and enables parents to more fully participate in creating a safe school environment.

Aspen Creek K-8
5550 Aspen Creek Dr.
Broomfield, CO 80020
720-887-4537

Contact: PTA President

Best Ideas

Coal Creek
Elementary
801 W. Tamarisk St.
Louisville, CO 80027
(303) 666-4843

Contact: John
Kiemele

“Evening of Sharing”

Brief Description

Every year, Coal Creek Elementary invites more than 20 social service agencies from the greater Boulder community, such as Habitat for Humanity, Boulder County Social Services, and the Woman’s Bean Project, to the school. Table displays are arranged around the gym so that representatives from these groups can provide information about their particular service orientation to Coal Creek students and parents. Volunteerism is a special need with many of the agencies, and the Evening of Sharing is our attempt to make outreach and service learning a reality to our students and parents.

The Second Grade students work with their teachers to create colorful pins to sell, and proceeds go towards supporting the Emergency Family Assistance Program of Boulder County. The school’s chorus also performs at this event, which helps draw in many parents. Crafts and other projects for the kids are also available.

This event is held during the holiday season, which integrates well with the spirit of giving that is so evident at that time of year.

Benefits

Volunteering

- Puts families in contact with volunteer opportunities within their community.

Student Learning

- Teaches the importance of community service and outreach to students and families.
- Service learning also strengthens the home-to-school connection.

Collaborating with the Community

- Using the school facility as a central meeting place helps make the various service organizations, and their associated needs, more real to students.
- Provides an opportunity to explore ways to give something back to the community.

H.O.P.E.—Hang On Please Everybody

Brief Description

Since suicide has now overtaken accidents as the leading cause of death for teens, The Parent Engagement Network of MHS sponsored an interactive gathering on teen depression for parents and students. Dr. Jan Hittleman of Compass House Outreach organized teen speakers and therapists. Dr. Teresa Teaford also provided an overview of the clinical signs of depression. Many teens also told their stories. After the presentations, everyone broke into small discussion groups to ask questions and share ideas and suggestions. Over 115 adults and teens participated in this awesome event. It sparked a lot of enthusiasm for finding ways to create a more caring community at MHS, and generated suggestions for school activities, and other events.

Benefits

Communication

- Strengthens the home-school connection by making teen depression “everyone’s problem” (school, students, parents, and community).

Parenting

- Helps parents to understand the effects of teen depression, and the warning signs to watch for.

Student Learning

- Provides practical solutions for dealing with depression to both students and parents.
- Provides students with school-based activities as a follow-up to this event.
- Helps students take charge of their own health and welfare, with the support and understanding of their parents and school.

Collaborating with the Community

- Uses community resources to provide information.
- Provides contacts for families who are dealing with teen depression.

School Decision Making & Advocacy

- Encourages the creation of a group to identify and respond to the issues and interests of parents.

Monarch High School
329 Campus Dr.
Louisville, CO 80027
(303) 665-5888

Contact: Paula Nelson

Best Ideas

Ryan Elementary
1405 Centaur Village
Dr.
Lafayette, CO 80026
(303) 665-3345

Contact: Maureen
Keeney

“Navigating the Teen Years”

Brief Description

Ryan Elementary established a series of workshops for 4th and 5th grade parents (and students, where applicable) to provide information and parenting tools on topics which are of concern to their parent community. Parents fill out a survey at the beginning of the year listing possible topics. Topics covered during this series have included:

- Physical and emotional changes of teenagers
- Creating a thriving family
- Family communication strategies
- Becoming familiar with pre-teen and teen social pressures

Speakers included: guidance counselors from Angevine Middle School, and representatives from community organizations such as Health Services, Circle of Concern Consortium and Boulder County Prevention Connection. These workshops have been successful getting parents connected with other parents with similar needs and concerns.

Benefits

Parenting

- Parents leave with a “treasure chest” of strategies and tools for parenting their children entering the teen years.

Collaborating with Community

- Provides a connection to the middle school that students will be attending.
- Community resources are used to strengthen families.
- Parents are informed about resources available in the community and strategies for utilizing those resources.

Latino Family Nights

Brief Description

Whittier holds monthly Latino Family Nights to help Spanish-speaking families better understand academic content and expectations in areas such as math, science and reading.

The evenings begin with a family activity. For example, at the “math night”, families took a math challenge test by working together on geometry problems at different stations. Children then share samples of their work and are asked to teach something to their parents.

The next part of the evening involves getting the parents together for a brief presentation about the curricular focus, where they also have a chance to ask questions or share insights. While the parents are meeting, the children go to another room to make take-home games related to the content area. Each evening ends with snacks and a drawing for free prizes. Parents may also choose a book in Spanish which they can add to their home library.

Several local businesses and foundations, including the Boulder Valley Foundation, have provided donations or funding for each of these events. Some of the monthly events were held at other venues such as CU’s Fiske Planetarium, and the Boulder Public Library.

Benefits

Communication

- Parents receive information and support and can ask questions in their native language in a relaxed family atmosphere.
- Provides an opportunity for parents and educators to interact and communicate regarding positive student behavior and achievement, not just regarding misbehavior.
- Provides regular opportunities to review student’s work for parent comment and review.

Student Learning

- Parents have information and assistance on how to foster learning at home.
- Strengthens the home-school connection by having families participate in the school curriculum.
- Achievement and attendance among Spanish-speaking students whose families attend has improved.

Whittier International
School
2008 Pine St.
Boulder, CO 80302
(303) 442-2282

Contact: Lauren Hoyt
(303) 442-2282

Best Ideas

Casey Middle School
2410 13th Street
Boulder, CO 80204
(303) 442-5235

Contact: Judith
Houlding
(303) 444-3337

“Fall Fiesta!”

Brief Description

Casey Middle School’s PTA organizes an annual fall Fiesta! Celebration that functions both as a school community-building event and a fundraiser. The celebration includes a dinner, for a nominal fee, which includes food from a local area restaurant and homemade entrees cooked by many of Casey’s Latino families. Free or reduced-price tickets are available for families who need it.

The Fiesta! also includes a silent auction, with many of the items being auctioned aimed at kids, such as going to the movies with a favorite teacher, which kids are encouraged to bid on at low, “kid prices”.

Benefits

Communication

- Provides a way for families to get to know one another and to meet teachers and administrators in a relaxed setting.
- Fosters a spirit of school community that continues throughout the school year.

Volunteering

- Provides volunteering opportunities for parents with limited amounts of time and resources.
- Shows appreciation for parents’ participation, and values their diverse contributions.

“Tickets for Time”

Brief Description

“Tickets for Time” is a concept that Eldorado K-8 uses each fall to let parents know about all the volunteer opportunities that are available for the school year.

Each year, the PTA Volunteer Coordinator polls all the teachers and staff for their volunteer needs, then puts together a packet of “tickets” listing all the various opportunities and/or needs. The packets are distributed to all Eldorado families, and parents are asked to look through the tickets and sign up for any volunteer jobs they might be interested in giving their time to. The volunteer coordinator compiles all the volunteer information from returned tickets into a master database. Then the volunteers are contacted and volunteer time is confirmed.

Eldorado K-8
3351 Indiana St.
Superior, CO 80027
(720) 304-6524

Contact: Sandy
Ripplinger

Benefits

Communication

- Parents have more insight into classroom activities and better understand expectations.
- Gives parents and teachers the opportunity to partner together.

Volunteering

- Creates a climate in which all parents feel valued and welcome.
- Connects all parents with volunteering opportunities in order for them to share their talents, resources and time according to their availability.
- Ensures that volunteer activities are meaningful and built on volunteer’s interests.

Best Ideas

Nederland Elementary
1 Sundown Trail
Nederland, CO 80466
(303) 258-7092

Contact: Marylou
Harrison
(303) 258-3432

“Family Math Night”

Brief Description

Every year parents and faculty at Nederland Elementary work together to put on “Family Math Night”, a fun and informative event that highlights what students are learning in math. First, teachers put together demonstrations, puppet shows, etc. for each of the grade levels that explain the math program, and parents share how math helps them in their jobs. Then, there are various family math activity stations in the gym which might include M&M sorting and graphing, geometric puzzle solving, or estimating weights and measures. Students earn tickets at each activity which can be used to “purchase” prizes at the math store, which requires even more math thinking.

Benefits

Communication

- Provides informal activities at which parents and staff can interact.
- Parents receive clear information about the math program and student expectations at each grade level.
- Provides an opportunity for parents and educators to communicate regarding positive achievement and expectations.

Student Learning

- Parents play an important role in helping students understand the importance of math in the every-day world.
- Strengthens the home-school connection by holding the event in the school setting.
- Parents have information and assistance on how to foster learning at home, give appropriate assistance, monitor homework and give feedback to teachers.

Classroom Volunteers

Brief Description

The greatest level of Parent Involvement at Superior Elementary comes from parents who volunteer in the classrooms. Parents assist teachers in a variety of ways which allows teachers to spend more one-on-one time with students.

Superior Elementary
1800 S. Indiana St.
Superior, CO 80027
(303) 543-9330

Contact: Stephanie Kirby

Benefits

Communicating

- Establishes opportunities for parents and educators to share information such as student strengths and learning preferences.

Volunteering

- Parents have volunteer opportunities that directly benefit their children.

More of Your Best Ideas

Educational Programs

Literacy Nights include inviting a “special guest” like Ronald McDonald or the Rockies mascot, Dinger. Teachers lead discussions for the parents about the teaching strategies they are using with their students. Parents and students work together throughout the evening. There are refreshments, and students get a book to add to their home library. This event has had very large Hispanic family participation.

Emerald Elementary
Broomfield

Rocket Club

Parents organize this after-school club where students build and launch rockets. The Rocket Club promotes learning and builds interest in science as a hobby or future career.

Heatherwood Elementary
Boulder

Summer Library Days

Parents fund the school library to remain open two days a week during the summer vacation. We have storytelling and book groups, and it serves as a community meeting place. Summer library days benefit new families in the area that come to meet other students. Parents have also used the time together to organize play groups and other activities to get to know one another better.

Heatherwood Elementary
Boulder

“Mathletes”

Mathletes is a math group that meets several times in the school year to complement the school math program and strengthen math competency. Parents assist school staff by volunteering time.

Heatherwood Elementary
Boulder

Arts & Cultural Mosaic Night

This event celebrates the school’s diversity and arts. Students artwork is showcased throughout the school, and many Eldorado families share their ethnic traditions throughout the evening. There are multicultural stage performances, and display tables in the hallways with items such as foods, clothing, crafts, artifacts, and traditions from countries all over the world. Students take pride in their ethnicity, and get a chance to show off their artwork. This event is also a way to involve parents from many cultures.

Eldorado K-8
Superior

More of Your Best Ideas

Social Events

Bingo Nights

Parents volunteer to run the bingo, including organizing prizes, pizza, pop, etc. It is a fun, wholesome time for everyone. A bingo license is required.

Foothill Elementary
Boulder

Fall Carnival

Parents organize carnival games, a chili cook-off and rides for community members. The event is often attended by students that have graduated from Heatherwood.

Heatherwood Elementary
Boulder

Community Night

At one of Eldorado K-8's regularly-scheduled PTA meetings, they added a few more things to the agenda in hopes of attracting more Eldorado families to attend. They invited their 7th and 8th grade choir to sing songs relevant to the Eldorado/Rock Creek neighborhood. There was pizza and pop for sale, and the local fire department was also invited. After finishing the PTA's business agenda, a magician entertained. It was a good way to give families information about what goes on at the PTA meetings, and at the school.

Eldorado K-8
Broomfield

Spring Dance

Broomfield Heights Middle School PTO and the Student Council sponsor a family dance each spring. Students and their families are invited, as well as the incoming 6th graders. This helps welcome the new students who will be attending the school in the fall. Each dance has a theme such as Hawaiian, the 50's, etc. There's a DJ, game booths, and a cake walk. Pizza and baked goods are for sale by the parents, and parents also work some of the booths. The incoming 6th graders all get a coupon for a free slice of pizza. There's also a small entrance fee charged at the door.

Broomfield Heights
Middle School
Broomfield

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Administrators, educators, and parents need to work together to find ways around the barriers to effective parent involvement in schools.

Some of the barriers are listed here, along with possible solutions.

Not Enough Time

Barrier: Parents often cite time as the single-greatest barrier to volunteering, attending meetings, or joining decision-making committees at their children's school. Often these activities are in conflict with work or other obligations.

Possible Solution: Be flexible and creative when scheduling meetings and events. Try a mixture of mornings, evenings and weekends to allow every parent to attend. Sponsor monthly community family events and use part of the time to give information to parents.

Not Understanding the School Work

Barrier: Some parents do not understand the curriculum content or the expectations that teachers have of their children.

Possible Solution: Set up informational meetings that cover different content areas and encourage parents to ask questions. Help parents understand where they can go to get homework help and how they can deal with issues before they arise.

Not Feeling Valued

Barrier: Some parents are not sure they have anything of value to contribute. Some feel intimidated by principals,

teachers and more educated parents. Many parents have had unpleasant school experiences, or have limited education and low literacy levels. These negative feelings can be reinforced by educators and administrators who give the impression that uninvolved parents are deficient in some way.

Possible Solution: Extend a personal welcome to parents who seem withdrawn or uncomfortable. Establish regular lines of communication based on mutual respect and trust between the school and home. Learn about special talents that parents have which can benefit the school. Reach out to parents with low literacy levels in different ways, such as phone calls or home visits.

Not Knowing How to Contribute

Barrier: Some parents have useful talents but do not know how to contribute to the school or to the parent organization.

Possible Solution: Don't wait for parents to offer to help. Seek them out through parent questionnaires that offer suggestions for teacher support or other volunteer opportunities.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Not Understanding the School System

Barrier: Many parents are unfamiliar with the school system and do not understand their rights as parents or ways to become involved.

Possible Solutions: Create a parent handbook that explains school rules, procedures and policies. Include names of school staff members who are contacts for specific issues. Encourage parents to attend PTA/PTO leadership training where they learn about the school system, the school “chain of command” and how their school board functions. Appoint parent representatives to the BVSD District Parent Council (DPC) and District Accreditation Committee (DAC), and have those individuals report back to the PTA/PTO.

Lack of Child Care

Barrier: Child care may not be routinely offered at meetings or school social functions. At the same time, parents may be discouraged from bringing their children to such events.

Possible Solutions: Find room at the school to provide child care while parents are at meetings. Be certain that childcare situations meet all safety and insurance requirements.

Not Feeling Welcome

Barrier: Parents may feel that they

are not welcome in the school. Staff interactions, attitudes, and the physical appearance of some schools may convey an unwelcoming environment.

Possible solutions: Provide training to all faculty and staff about the importance of parent involvement, and to develop the skills needed to successfully interact with parents. Let parents know that they are welcome to visit during the school day, and that badges are used for security reasons. Post welcome signs in all languages spoken at the school at each entrance and on each classroom door.

Parents in Need

Barrier: Families suffering from economic stress must address their own needs for food, clothing and shelter before they can see clear to become more involved in their children’s education.

Possible solutions: Provide information to help parents access and secure the health and social services they need for themselves and their families. Schools can also work out arrangements with social and health agencies to provide services at the school through school-based clinics or near the school in community-based clinics.

There may be other barriers specific to your school.

Engage in a discussion to identify your barriers and possible solutions.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Parent Organizations also have barriers to overcome when working within their schools.

Snobbery and Exclusion

Barrier: Some parents view PTO, PTA, or other parent groups as cliques that exclude newcomers and minorities.

Possible Solutions: Actively seek new members and leaders that represent the school community. Talk with other organizations (such as community groups, other schools, or BVSD personnel), read books, or attend workshops to find appropriate ways to reach out to specific populations and make your parent organization more inclusive.

Resistance to Change

Barrier: Some parent organization members, school administrators, and teachers may resist the idea of parent organizations in roles other than providing hospitality and financial support for school needs.

Possible Solutions: Parent organizations need to work with educators to discuss how to involve parents in advocacy and create home-to-school partnerships to unite efforts and address the needs of parents and children.

Lack of Training

Barrier: Many parent organization leaders come into their position with little or no

leadership experience.

Possible Solutions: Seek and provide ongoing training for parents in the areas of leadership, advocacy, communication so that they can effectively serve in their roles and accomplish the goals of the organization.

Language

Barrier: Parents who don't speak English may not understand speakers at meetings and handouts. Not all languages spoken at schools are translated.

Possible solutions: Provide printed materials in all languages spoken by the families at school. Help identify and secure interpreters and translators for workshops and meetings.

Key Resources for Parent Involvement in Schools

The National PTA
330 North Wabash Ave.
Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 670-6782
www.pta.org

National Education Association
1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
www.nea.org/parents

The National School Boards Association
1680 Duke St.
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-6722
www.nsba.org

National Coalition for Parent
Involvement in Education
3929 Old Lee Hwy, Suite 91-A
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 359-8973
www.ncpie.org

Communities in Schools
277 South Washington St.
Suite 210
Alexandria, VA 22314
(800) CIS-4KIDS
www.cisnet.org

Colorado PTA
7859 W. 38th Ave.
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033
(303) 420-7820
www.copta.org

Colorado Department of Education
201 E. Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80203-1799
(303) 866-6600
www.cde.state.co.us

Colorado Association of School Boards
1200 Grant Street
Denver, CO 80203-2306
(303) 832-1000
www.casb.org

Colorado Parent Information and Resource
Center
3607 Martin Luther King Blvd.
Denver, CO 80205
(303) 355-5387
www.cpirc.org

Boulder Valley School District
6500 Arapahoe Rd.
Boulder, CO 80303
(303) 447-1010
www.bvbsd.k12.co.us

Latino Parent Leadership Training Program
(Boulder Community Action Programs)
P.O. Box 741
Boulder, CO 80306
(303) 441-3998
Email: ngallo@co.boulder.co.us

*Building Successful Partnerships: A Guide for
Developing Parent and Family Involvement
Programs* (2000), Comer, Dr. James P.
Available through the National PTA website at
www.pta.org

Tell Us How You Have Used This Booklet

This project was funded by the Foundation for Boulder Valley Schools with the support of various Foundation donors. We'd like to hear what you think about this booklet, and how you have used it to improve Parent Involvement at your school. Please copy this form, fill it out, and return it to us at the fax number or address below. **Your feedback is important for evaluating this grant.**

School: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ ZIP: _____

Contact Person: _____ Daytime Telephone: _____

Email address: _____

Was this booklet useful to your Parent Organization? _____

How did you use this booklet at your school? _____

Did you see any projects in this book that might be implemented at your school?

If so, what are your plans? _____

(Attach separate sheet if necessary)

Would your school be interested in participating in a Parent Involvement certification process that would also serve to develop a Parent Involvement Plan or Policy at your school?

**Please fax the completed form to the Colorado PTA office at (303) 420-7703, Attn.:
Becky Karch**

**Or mail to: Boulder Valley PTA
c/o BVSD Education Center
6500 Arapahoe Rd.**

The word *parent* used throughout this booklet refers to all those who are involved in a child's education, recognizing that other adults, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, stepparents, and guardians may also carry the primary responsibility for a child's education and development, and are the primary influence in children's lives.

Parent involvement refers to the participation of parents in every facet of children's education and development from birth to adulthood.



Boulder Valley

PTA

everychild.onevoice.

**Boulder Valley PTA
c/o BVSD Education Cen-
ter
6500 Arapahoe Rd.
Boulder, CO 80303**