

You're Invited

Four tips on how to advertise your Open House

Display Open House flyers on doors and in hallways during enrollment.

If your school is doing Porch Visits, make sure that an Open House flyer is included in information packets.

If the principal sends out a Welcome Back letter to families, include the Open House date and time in the body of the letter.

The night before the event, send out a reminder ParentLink call to all families.

Something to Remember

Evaluation

- What tools will be used to evaluate the success of the event?
- Have a post-dialog session to discuss what worked, what needs to be improved and staff members' impressions of the event.



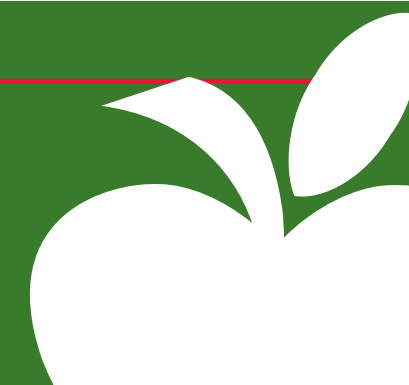
Resources

The *Parent Involvement Guide to Open House* and accompanying tools are available on the Parent Involvement portal.

- Here's My Child, Handle With Care Form*
- Sign-In Sheets
- Volunteer Short Form
- Volunteer Registration Form
- Opportunities for Involvement Volunteer Sign-Up Sheet
- Opportunities for Involvement Flyer
- Parent Involvement Survey

a parent involvement guide to ...

Open House



Open House Defined

Open House is an informal school-wide event used to kick off a new school year. It is an opportunity for families and students to become acquainted with school staff and programs. The goal is to establish an early connection between home and school.

Best Practices

Over the years, school staff may notice that attendance at the traditional Open House has decreased significantly. Parents of kindergarten or new students are most likely to attend. After first or second grade, parents sometimes feel they have already "been there, done that" when it comes to Open House. What's a school to do?

- **What's in a name?** A simple strategy like changing the name from Open House to "Back to School Blast Off" can create new excitement about the event. The new name can be used as a starting point to make other changes. Use the new name as a theme for student work on display or for activities families engage in during or after the event.
- **Shadow Night** is a great option for middle schools. Parents follow their child's schedule. In each classroom, they receive a brief description of the class and other relevant expectations.



Classes last no longer than five or ten minutes and a bell announces when it's time to move. During "lunch period," serve refreshments to parents in the cafeteria.

- **Science Expo** (or Math Madness, etc.) is a new twist to try in place of the traditional Open House. Have staff and community members run booths that are centered around a theme. Make activities fun, interactive and quick. The computer lab may be used for online demonstrations. The gym may be used for one big physical challenge or to house several activities. A punch card or passport may be used to qualify families for a door prize drawing.

Best Practices continued on Page 2.

- Open House Defined
- Best Practices
- What's Your Vision
- Considerations for Planning
- Evaluation
- Resources



Parent Involvement Guide to Open House is produced by the Parent and Community Connection Team of Wichita Public Schools.

06.08/1M

Best Practices continued ...

- An **all-school picnic or barbecue** is a great way to welcome families and students back to school. Some schools develop partnerships with businesses that agree to sponsor such events.
- A **scavenger hunt** through the school building is another way to engage families in the Open House process. Give families a list of clues (or items to locate) that lead them to various areas in the building. Prizes may be given for bringing answer sheets back quickly and correctly.
- **Make Open House more intimate.** Often, school-wide events are rushed and lack a personal touch. Consider hosting separate Open House events for different grade levels on different nights. This allows parents with multiple children opportunities to spend more time connecting with each child's teacher.
- **Take the time and effort to make the exterior of the school as inviting as the interior.** Display colorful decorations and welcome signs in multiple languages along the entryway. Have staff outside to greet and welcome families as they arrive.
- **Put your best foot forward.** The school should be clean and inviting to all who enter. It should be an example of one of the best-groomed facilities in the community.

Leave Your Baggage at the Door

Put previous negative experiences with teachers, parents or administrators behind you and begin each interaction with an open mind and a positive attitude.

Building Successful Partnerships, National PTA®

Considerations for Planning

Start with the big picture in mind. Open House is one of the contracted evening events that teachers are required to work. It is important to evaluate whether or not Open House is being utilized to its fullest capacity. Are you getting the most "bang for your buck?" From the viewpoint of parents, is this a good opportunity to personally connect with teachers?

While Open House varies by school, there are three basic purposes:

1. **Start the school year by interacting with families in a relaxed environment.**
2. **Begin building relationships between parents and staff.**
3. **Send the message that you welcome and value parent involvement at your school.**

These goals sound simple enough. But sometimes, we approach Open House with our minds set on "auto pilot." We may have done the same thing at Open House for many years, rarely questioning the benefits or outcomes. Attendance may have dwindled, but have we collected the data or questioned the possible causes?

Considerations for Planning continued on Page 3.

What's Your Vision?

Considerations for Planning continued ...

Goals

- Begin with the three purposes of Open House. Do you agree with them? What are you going to do to meet them?
- Be specific! If you decided to shoot for the stars and aim for 100% attendance, what steps would your team need to take?
- What other defined goals do you have for Open House?

Here are some questions to consider as you plan:

- Has the staff agreed on the main purpose of Open House?
- What are the priorities? (For example, sharing information, building relationships, having fun.)
- What can be done to increase attendance?
- Is Open House scheduled so parents are able to attend?
- Does the term "Open House" really describe what we hope to accomplish? If big changes are being made, consider changing the name of the event to something that sounds new and exciting! How about a "Back-to-School Bash?"

Determine who will be responsible for:

- Technology details.
- Ordering food and drinks.
- Ordering tables and chairs.
- Set-up (rooms, tables, refreshments, etc.).
- Information and sign-in tables.
- Greeting.
- Clean up.

Staff Engagement

- Develop a checklist to determine how each of the following people will be involved with Open House:
 - Principal
 - Assistant Principal
 - Teachers
 - Support Staff
 - Volunteer Coordinator
 - Custodian
 - Parent Involvement Team

Planning Checklist

- Tables and chairs
- Sign-in sheets, clipboards, pens, etc.
- Interpreters
- Printed materials
- Welcome posters, signs and bulletin boards. Be sure to translate posters and signs in other languages
- Maps of the building
- Copies of staff names and room numbers
- Cups, napkins, plates, plastic ware
- Food, beverages and ice
- Food warmers or coolers (as needed)
- Clean restrooms
- Trash receptacles
- Door prizes (optional)
- Audio-visual equipment, including microphone and sound system
- _____
- _____