

Ideas for Helping Parents Get to Know Program Staff¹

Ideas to Get You Started.....

1. Provide Parents with Information about Program Staff.

-  Display close-up photos of staff involved in a favorite program activity (or engaged in a favorite leisure-time hobby or pastime). Select pictures that clearly show faces, so they are easily recognizable for parents. Create informal biographies or autobiographies that include information about each staff person's education, experience, skills, and talents. Emphasize information that relates directly to program activities as well as interests and hobbies staff enjoy on their own time. Keep the tone of each bio informal and friendly. Clearly post the name each staff person likes to be called next to the photos and bios. (Be sure the information provided is appropriate to share with parents and children.)
-  Publish a special edition of your program newsletter, featuring staff photos and biographies or autobiographies.
-  Feature a photo and brief autobiography of one staff member in each issue of your program newsletter.
-  Publish brief articles by staff in your parent newsletter (articles on topics such as what staff like best about working in your program; how staff share hobbies, talents, or skills with the children, etc.). Encourage parents to talk with staff about their reactions to the articles.
-  Mount staff photos and brief bios or quotes in a scrapbook or photo album. Display the album in your ***Parent Comfort Corner*** or near the entrance where parents come and go.

Other Ideas for Providing Parents with Information about Staff....

¹ Excerpted with permission from Roberta L. Newman, *Building Relationships with Parents and Families in School-Age Programs, 2nd Edition, Revised*. New Albany, OH: School-Age NOTES, 2008. (Originally published in conjunction with Work/Family Directions, Boston, MA, At&T Family Development Fund.) Pages 114 – 115.

2. Help Parents Identify Staff Members.

-  Have each staff member take the initiative to introduce himself/herself to each parent in the program. In addition to names, introductions might include titles, roles staff play in the program, and something special the staff person likes to do with children in the program.
-  Have staff wear easy-to-read name tags (especially at times of the year when many new families have been enrolled OR at times when staff themselves are new).
-  Create a large mobile featuring photos and names of staff members. Display the mobile near the entrance to the program.
-  For larger programs, consider having staff wear brightly colored shirts embroidered with the program logo or name. This helps parents distinguish staff from volunteers and visiting parents and makes it easier for parents to know who to approach for help, etc.
-  Post staff photos and bios on the program **Web Site**.

Other Ideas for Helping Parents Identify Staff.....

3. Provide Opportunities for Parents and Staff to Work Together and to Interact Informally.

-  Plan family events where parents, staff, and children have opportunities to socialize informally (pizza parties, pot luck suppers, fast food buffets, bowling, hiking, camping experiences, field days, family carnival days, etc.)
-  Have individual staff members and parents serve together on committees related to various aspects of the program (policy-making, fund raising, parent education, resource development, publicity, newsletter, or other committees needed in your program).
-  Sponsor regular **Sharing Meetings** (monthly or bi-monthly) where parents and staff discuss parent and staff ideas, suggestions, and concerns.
-  Put on a joint staff/parent talent show for children in the program.
-  Invite individual parents to join with staff members to plan and carry out a special program activity, club, or project with the children - cooking, woodworking, weaving, model building, pine block derby, kite flying, photography, etc.

Other Ideas for Providing Opportunities for Parents and Staff to Work Together and to Interact Informally.....