

IDEAS FOR PARENT BULLETIN BOARDS AND WEB SITES FOR SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS¹

Display a **Parent Bulletin Board** in a spot that is visible to parents as they come and go. If your program and program parents have access to the Internet, consider creating **Web Site** that serves as a **Parent Bulletin Board**. Unless you are certain that ALL parents have access to the Internet, don't depend on the **Web Site Parent Bulletin Board** to get information out. Provide both an **In-House Parent Bulletin Board** and a **Web Site Parent Bulletin Board**. Here are some ideas for developing the content of **Parent Bulletin Boards**.

Content

Include separate sections of information on a variety of different topics. Examples of appropriate sections are listed below. Select sections that are most appropriate for parents in your program. Start with a few sections and topics. Add more as you learn more about parents' needs, interests, and concerns.

What's Happening: Information about the program

- ✓ Samples of program brochures.
- ✓ Registration information.
- ✓ Copy of the current program newsletter (see ideas for newsletters later in **Section Two**).
- ✓ Announcements about any changes in the calendar or schedule.
- ✓ Weekly or monthly calendar of planned activity offerings, including a general schedule for the day.
- ✓ News about club activities.
- ✓ Photographs of children engaged in different activities: field trips, building with blocks or Legos, playacting in the drama area, reading, playing outdoor games, playing a board game, helping a friend, etc. etc. etc. Add an extra touch by including quotes by the children about what's going on in the photographs.
- ✓ Children's favorite jokes of the day or week.
- ✓ Quotable quotes from children at work and play in the program.

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 96 - 98.

- ✓ Announcements of special upcoming events: parent get-togethers, parent advisory group meetings, performances by the children (talent shows, magic shows, etc.), field days (like wacky Olympics), appearances of special visitors from the community, etc. etc. etc.
- ✓ Announcements of parent workshops and seminars sponsored by the program.
- ✓ Invitations for parent participation in specific activities.
- ✓ Requests for contributions of re-cycle-able materials for use in the program.
- ✓ Requests for help in other areas of the program that could benefit from parent assistance or ideas.

Community Activities and Other Resources for Parents

- ✓ Listings and pamphlets about professional resources and community agencies related to family living, health care, consumer assistance, family finances, etc.
- ✓ Community sponsored workshop opportunities on topics of interest to parents: single parenting, separation and divorce, stress management, toy safety, guiding children's behavior, balancing work and family, etc. etc. etc.
- ✓ Community recreational opportunities for children and families.
- ✓ Local happenings of interest to families in your community.
- ✓ Book reviews on topics of interest to parents (for children and adults).

People to People News

Create this section to help parents, staff, and supporters of the program get to know more about each other as people. Here are some ideas:

- ✓ Photos of staff members, including brief bios of their educational background and experience, as well as special hobbies and other leisure time interests.
- ✓ Photos of families in the program, with brief descriptions of family interests, activities, traditions, parents' work activities, etc., provided by the parents and children. If space is an issue, make this section a "Family or Families of the Week" feature and post new families each week.
- ✓ Photos of people who provide your program with valued support and assistance: corporate donors, special visitors, regular volunteers. Invite each person to contribute a brief quote about why they support the program, how they feel about their experience at the program, or why they feel the program is important to the community.

- ✓ News about parents in the program (e.g. Ms. Jones named employee of the month, Mr. Sanchez receives master's degree, Mr. and Mrs. Kelly open a restaurant, Ms. Baker volunteers at community soup kitchen, etc. Dr. Johnson speaks at medical convention). Be sure to ask children and parents regularly about their activities and accomplishments and feature as many parents as possible – with their permission, of course!

Give Us Your Ideas and Comments Section

Examples:

- ✓ **Parent Feedback Forms:** *I Have an Idea, Have a Compliment, I Have Problem* (See Samples later in **Section Two**)
- ✓ **Ongoing Parent Survey Forms** with a notice encouraging parents to complete these forms whenever they would like to comment on how the program is going. (See Sample Questions for **Ongoing Parent Survey Forms** later in **Section Two**).
- ✓ **Comments Section:** Quotes from parents about the program (excerpted from *I Have a Compliment Forms*) when parents give you permission to share their comments)

Format

If you plan to create and maintain a **Parent Bulletin Board** within your program, refer to the suggestions that follow. They will help you develop a bulletin board that parents will want to stop and read. If you also plan to develop a **Web Site Parent Bulletin Board** that includes any or all of the sections described above, secure the services of a **Web Site Designer**. Once your **Web Site** is up and operational, secure a **Web Master** to manage your **Web Site**. You may be able to locate both a **Web Site Designer** and **Web Master** who will donate their time to creating and maintaining a **Web Site** for your program (e.g. a parent who has skills in this area, a hobbyist, a firm specializing in **Web Site Design** that does some community pro bono work).

*Tips for Creating and Maintaining an **In-House Parent Bulletin Board***

- Secure a large space for the bulletin board so that items won't be crowded.
- Use fadeless paper as a background, if possible. It holds its color indefinitely so that you won't have to replace it as you remove items and change your bulletin board around. Use bold primary colors, but don't overpower the eye (e.g. avoid fluorescent colors for the background).
- Create borders to enhance the overall appearance of the board and to separate each section. Use commercial border products that are fadeless and come in a variety of colors. Use children's artwork for extra interest.
- Label the board in letters about 4 to 5 inches high. Place the label above or at the top of the bulletin board. Consider using letters cut from corrugated paper; it comes in a variety of colors and adds texture and interest to the bulletin board. Or, make a computer generated banner – using an attractive font and clip art.
- Mount photographs or notices on colored card stock to set them off.
- Highlight headings and important information in bright colors with markers to accent some items and spark curiosity.
- When posting information, start from the center of the board and work out. Remember to separate each major section so that information is easy to locate. Avoid straight lines or uniform rows that can make a board look dull and uninteresting. Use material that offers variety in size, shape and color. Fill the board with lots of information, but avoid overcrowding.
- Keep an ongoing file of information and keep the board fresh and up to date! Be sure to remove information about events that are over!
- Solicit help from one or more parents. Ask them to keep an eye out for interesting articles and events, help you create and maintain the board, help you generate new ideas about what parents would like to see on the bulletin board.