



INCREASING PARENT INVOLVEMENT

For May 4th and BEYOND!

Created by: Fran Streich, UFT Parent Liaison and Zakiyah Ansari, Advocacy Director, AQE

- TAKE AWAY YOUR NEGATIVE FEELINGS AND UNDERSTAND THE OBSTACLES TO ORGANIZING
- Don't say "only a few people will come", or "it's always the same few", or "we have tried everything and it doesn't work". Then you are defeated before you start.
- Organizer rule: set realistic expectations. Unless it's a really hot issue, don't expect more than 5-10% of total parent population to turn out regularly. Example if you want 50 ppl you must make at least 300 calls and get 100 yesses
- Obstacles are real and have to be recognized and worked with: child care, language, multiple jobs.
- Think of ways parents can get involved without having to come to a meeting. Have a menu of things people can do on their own time. Not everyone can come out to meetings, that doesn't mean that they don't care about the school or their child.

***TRANSLATING MATERIALS AND PROVIDING TRANSLATION
AT MEETINGS ARE CRUCIAL!***

BUILDING A STRONG PARENT BASE



Building a Strong Parent Base: Eliminating Your Negatives

NEGATIVE

*When there is low attendance,
Instead of saying:*

“We have 500 students in this school and only 10 parents are here. There should be at least 100.”

“Parents just don’t care.”

“Parents are too busy to come.”

“We can’t get the Spanish speaking parents here.”

“Teachers don’t come to our meetings.”

POSITIVE

You can say:

“It’s so great that you are all here. Let’s brainstorm together how to bring one more person each for our next meeting.”

“Most parents do care. Let’s see if we can figure out what they care the most about and try to get them into the school. What are your ideas for that?”

“Can we figure out different times to do meetings?” “Can we brainstorm some ways we can ask people to get involved if they can’t come to meetings?”

“Can we identify a bilingual parent or teacher to help with outreach? Can we get materials translated for the meeting and for reports afterwards? Can we use headsets at the meeting for translation?”

“Can someone reach out to their teacher and get their ideas? Can we hold a meeting after school once a month so it’s better for staff? Can we talk to the chapter leader about a meeting with teachers?”



CONTINUED

NEGATIVE

If you don't know the answer to questions:

Don't make up an answer because you think you might look bad if you don't know it.

If there is a disruptive parent and you can't get through the agenda, instead of saying nothing and letting them dominate or arguing with that person...

POSITIVE

Instead say:

"That is a great question. I am sorry I don't know the answer to that. Does anyone else know the answer?"
If not, "I will find out and get back to you."

Say:

"Let me see a show of hands, how many people are ready to move on to the next item and table further discussion for now" or ask that person to form a sub-committee to address their issue, or if you know ahead of time there will be problems, ask them to do a job at the meeting so that they will be involved and engaged.



- You can't build parent base with just flyers, emails or robo (automatic) calls alone
- Every event is an opportunity to **BUILD YOUR LIST** including petitions, pledges or sign in sheets. *Important written legibly. Capture cell phone with authorization to text, twitter info, & back up phone number*
- **PERSONAL CONTACT IS KEY!** Make phone calls. Even 5 volunteers can each call 15 people regularly, which allows you to reach 75 people together.
- If you are able, door knock with a flyer on blocks or housing projects that are near a school. Put signs up in store windows, laundromats, etc. and **get contact information**
- Use several different flyers to build a sense of urgency: "Only 3 more days until....", etc
- **FOLLOW UP WITH PEOPLE** who volunteer. Call them to thank them, get feedback and talk about next steps.
- Have **regular communication** through a group email or newsletter (even if it's just one page) with notes from the meeting so people who didn't come feel like they missed something good.
- Find multiple ways for people to contribute if they can't attend meetings: decorate, hand out flyers, make phone calls, call an elected official, write a letter, send an email, design a flyer, help with a newsletter.

USING CONTACTS TO BUILD A GROUP

TIPS FOR TALKING TO PARENTS OUTSIDE YOUR SCHOOL

- Stress urgency and importance.
- Use an issue and get them talking about what they care about.
- Get agreement that it's important to work on that issue or identify another issue that they care about.
- Make it clear that you want their input.
- Get a commitment on attendance for May 4th walk-in and get them to write down the details.
- Get a commitment from them to bring someone else to the walk-in if they say yes, or tell someone else.



- “Hi, my name is _____ and I am a teacher at _____ (school name), is _____ there?”
- “Did you hear that we are having a very important event happening at the school on May 4th? Teachers and staff are really concerned about _____” (name a specific issue: budgets that may be cut, testing, charter school, etc.)
- “Is that something you are concerned about?”
- IF THEY SAY YES say “we really need you to come and participate in the Walk in at the school, your voice on these issues matters”. “Can we count on you to be there”?
- “Do you have a pen? Let me give you the info again.” Give them date and time.
- “Do you think you can bring someone else with you or let someone know? Great, thanks. See you on May 4th.”
- IF THEY SAY NO to the issue you mentioned, ask them, “if they are able to help make phone calls or participate in making some of the posters for the event”
Whatever they are able to contribute is extremely helpful. We are in this together.
- If you are petitioning, ask them to sign the petition so you can get their information and let them know we are working to get a lot of signatures for this issue or just building a parent contact list to keep everyone informed of school news.

“RAP” FOR CALLS OR PETITIONING AT SCHOOL



BEFORE

- ID where you have access to parents and plan to talk with _____ a day – in - classroom, at pick up and drop off, on the phone
- Use Sign-up sheet/count on me Form, get phone numbers!
- Create a few chants w parents and students. (NOT TOO MANY 3 or 4 If you have multiple languages represented make sure you at least one in that language)
- Ask for commitments “can I count on seeing you there? “ Ask who else can you bring
- Eve of May 2 and 3- call everyone on your lists that said yes or maybe-confirmation

DAY OF

- Sign in sheet with column for helping and always phone numbers!
- Have at least one parent speaker and student speaker
- Set up in a visible place- visible to school community and to the public
- Hand out a one-pager- why we are here, with contact info (sample flyer provided)
- VERY IMPORTANT: Ask parents to commit to visit school board member or legislator
- Have a flyer for a follow up meeting or action date!

AFTER

- Talk to parents when you see them, call as many as you can from sign in list- what did you think? What do you think our school needs? Can I count on you to come to _____

BETWEEN NOW, MAY 4, AND BEYOND!



REMEMBER
THE SCIENCE OF NUMBERS SAYS...

**In order to get 50 people to attend,
you'll need to reach out to 300 people.**

DOES NOT INCLUDE
ROBOCALLS OR FLYERING



- Have good attendance. Don't expect robo calls and flyers to work unless it's a very "hot" issue. **Parent-to-parent calls are the best, as well as** asking people to bring their ideas to the meeting. Build contact lists to call from petitions, school events, parent teacher conferences.
- Make sure sign-in sheets include phone, email and address with other information. (Twitter or Instagram)
- Create Ground Rules together
- Meeting should be informative. People should learn something new.
- Different people should have a chance to present or report, not just same ones
- Recognition is given for the work people have done
- **Have some discussion questions.** If you just report or talk at people they do not feel engaged. Break people into small groups to do an activity related to the main issue.
- Stick to your agenda. Don't let one voice dominate, don't stifle discussion either.
- Accomplish something concrete - make a decision or a plan of action.
- Have some work or assignment for people to do after the meeting where possible. (calling an elected official, talking to other parents. for e.g.)
- Use "Count on Me Forms" to solicit volunteers, find out what workshops people are interested in, what organizations they belong to, can they help with phone calls, class parent. etc.
- Set the follow-up date for next meeting
- Send out summary of meeting. Call people back who said they were coming and did not attend, find out why they weren't there and fill them in.

ELEMENTS OF A GOOD MEETING



- 1. Welcome and Introductions (people can say why they are there or briefly say what they are mainly concerned)
- 2. Brief Overview of Issue/Problem (for example, we are losing our arts or sports program because of budget cuts)
- 3. Discussion Questions
 - What impact will this have on our school? (make a list on chart paper)
 - Do we want to fight this?
- 4. Plan of Action
 - Divide up specific responsibilities, set dates for things to do (ie. leafleting, meeting with someone in power around the issue, etc)
- 5. Summary and Next Meeting Date

SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA

