

Parent Appreciation Day

*The School District of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

Officials from the School District of Philadelphia showered their parent volunteers with appreciation and information at an all-day celebration last fall. During Parent Appreciation Day, more than 400 parents celebrated their volunteer efforts and learned ways to get even more involved.

For years, district officials have shown parents their appreciation for all the hard work the volunteers do in and for their schools. But a simple pizza dinner didn't seem enough. District facilitators decided that an all-day event, complete with useful workshops, gift baskets, and a resource fair would more adequately celebrate all that volunteers had done for Philadelphia's children. The new approach also increased parents' knowledge about the resources the district has available to help their children succeed in school.

Administrators began planning months in advance, contacting local community organizations and business partners and asking for donations. They sent press releases to local radio and television stations and e-mails to the district's distribution lists. The planners also used the district's public access television station to advertise the event.

More than 400 parents came to celebrate their volunteer work on Parent Appreciation Day. At breakfast, parents talked with district and school staff and other parents, sharing their volunteer success stories. A series of workshops encouraged parents to become even more involved. Topics included: Title I Basics, How to Get Your Child into the School of Your Choice, and Advocating for Your Special Needs Child. Parents who chose not to attend workshops were invited to explore booths at an all-day resource fair to learn more about community programs and services for their children and families.

Prior to Parent Appreciation Day, students competed in an essay contest about their parents' volunteer efforts. At lunch, district

officials announced the results of the contest. At the end of the day several lucky parents received raffle and other incentive prizes.

Everyone involved agreed that Parent Appreciation Day was successful. "I am glad I came. I got so much useful information. I am going to share this with my neighbors," one parent said.

"It was a lot of work, but I think that the parents learned a lot and know that we value their involvement," a staff member said.

The whole day cost approximately \$5,500, with Title I funds and donations from community partners covering the expenses.

At the next Parent Appreciation Day, the leaders aim to increase the participation of top-level district administrators to make the annual event even more successful.

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