
FRIENDSHIP BREAKFASTS FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Barrett Academy

Akron, Ohio

To improve family-school communication (Type 2), teachers, parents, and staff at Barrett Academy started "Friendship Breakfasts for Parents and Teachers." Parents are invited to come for a friendship breakfast with their child's teacher. This breakfast was developed in response to the needs of parents who expressed interest in a special time to become better acquainted with their children's teachers, and to parents who felt uncomfortable in their relations with school staff.

Many people including—volunteer parents, students, teachers, administrative and custodial staff—assisted in the planning and hosting of the breakfasts. Volunteer parents made invitations for each breakfast, and the counselors sent the invitations home and compiled RSVPs. Custodial staff set up the area, and the school counselor trained 5th grade students as greeters and servers. Teachers prepared classroom students for the special presentation they would make to parents in the classroom following breakfast. Support staff such as counselors, tutors, and specialists covered the classrooms during breakfast when the teachers were with parents. The community was also involved as a local medical group donated individual student books designed for drug prevention. These were distributed to parents and children at each breakfast event.

When parents arrived at the "Friendship Breakfast," students greeted them and ushered them to a table hosted by their child's teacher. After a welcome by administrative staff, parents and teachers were served a buffet breakfast by students. The teachers worked to channel conversation toward getting acquainted with the parents, and they invited them to reserve academic issues to parent/teacher conferencing. At the end of the breakfast, parents visited their child's classroom for a planned presentation by students.

Both parents and teachers expressed appreciation for the opportunity to casually interact with one another. Attendance was high with seventy percent who called in to RSVP attending the event compared with fifty percent of parents attending other school events. Though they do not have a baseline comparison, teachers reported that incidents of angry parents seemed to be smaller in number after the breakfasts.

Carolyn Collins, the primary contact person at Barrett Academy, recommends this practice for elementary students in any community. Financial resources for the breakfasts came from schoolwide parent involvement monies.

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