
Summer Learning Fair

Kathleen G. Goodwin Elementary School
Old Saybrook, Connecticut

How can you help parents keep children meaningfully engaged in a variety of learning and recreational activities during the summer months? The Home/School Forum of Kathleen E. Goodwin Elementary School's P.T.O. sponsored an evening to answer this question. We invited organizations within the community to come to the school one evening to provide parents with information about their summer programs.

The design for the program was simple and inexpensive. To provide plenty of time for brainstorming, planning, and reservations, the committee chose the date for the activity one year in advance. The committee then brainstormed and listed organizations within the community that provided valuable activities for children during the year and throughout the summer months. Just prior to the New Year, committee members contacted these organizations and asked if they might be interested in presenting summer program information to parents at our "Summer Learning Fair" in April. The responses from the organizations were overwhelmingly favorable, and the P.T.O. mailed formal registration information to interested organizations in February.

Those in charge of publicity for the "Summer Learning Fair" sent fliers home with students and provided information to the local newspapers. The agenda for the event included the following: (1) provide parents with a list of organizations offering summer programs along with a school map showing the locations of the presentations that evening, (2) welcome and orient the parents and presenters for ten minutes, (3) allow parents the opportunity to choose the presenters of their choice in the eight 10-minute periods. Each organization met with interested parents in separate classrooms, and no registrations were permitted on the evening of the event.

The "Summer Learning Fair" was an enormous success for parents as well as the organizations that were represented. The organizations represented at the fair provided a variety of summer learning activities, including sailing lessons, Nature Center camp programs, River School programs, Boy and Girl Scouts, public library programs, YMCA programs, and more.

Other than the costs for fliers and 30 mailings to organizations, minimal expenses were required in order to implement this program. More than 150 parents in a school population of 440 children attended the fair. Parents found the evening to be a highly informative and efficient way to collect data from the different organizations. Only a few of the organizations represented expressed dissatisfaction with the number of parents visiting them, asking questions, and securing information on summer activities. Representatives of

the organizations were also pleased that they were able to give parents information about programs offered during the school year.

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