
VIDEO TO HOME PROJECT WITH KID-COURIERS

Anoka-Hennepin Independent School District

Anoka, Minnesota

In the fall of 1998, the Anoka-Hennepin Independent School District held a well-kept secret. Tucked away in their Staff Development Center, the Parent Involvement Resource Center (PIRC) had collected approximately 1000 resource materials on parenting topics for district parents and staff to borrow. With a new cataloging system and display space, it was time to increase awareness of PIRC. In addition, several district schools had new on-site Parent Resource Centers (PRC), which needed advertising.

The Video to Home Project targeted three purposes:

1. Share helpful information regarding child development and learning with parents;
2. Showcase a school's PRC and demonstrate ease of use; and
3. Introduce PIRC to part of the community.

Ramsey Elementary was selected for piloting this project, because it had a well-established PRC and had instituted "Kid-Courier," allowing students to tote PRC resource materials between school and home. Two kindergarten teachers and a first grade teacher agreed to participate and worked with the PIRC coordinator on project details. From the PIRC collection, each teacher chose a Sunburst Communications video featuring renowned authors Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. The well-paced videos addressed parenting K-1 students, and each ran approximately forty minutes. At least one week prior to initiating the project, teachers sent home with each student a letter explaining the project. Parents could opt out and about 7% did, leaving 100 participating families.

A student (Kid-Courier) in each class carried home a video in a zippered plastic bag including instructions, tip sheets summarizing the video, and a survey. Parents were asked to view the video, complete the survey, and return both on the following school day. The survey gave parents an opportunity to request the video on a different day and to request other videos in the PRC and PIRC collections.

Predictably, the video often did not come back to school the next day. Teachers simply accommodated by allowing extra time. On fifty-six returned surveys, parents indicated:

- the video addressed issues of importance to them 98.2%
- the video offered useful suggestions 96.5%
- the video was easy to watch 92.9%
- the tip sheets were helpful to use with the video 83.4%

Seven parents asked to receive the video another evening; thirty-six requested information on other PRC videos.

In 1999-2000, the project grew to six Ramsey Elementary teachers and their eight classes. About 175 families participated. Surveys of all videos used this year were overwhelmingly positive with one-fourth of respondents requesting PRC and PIRC catalogs.

Next year the project will graduate to middle school. Four sixth grade teachers at Sandburg Middle School will send home videos with their homeroom students several times. They plan to start with 11-14 minute Boys Town videos. With the eight Ramsey teachers participating, about 350 families will be involved. Though the project was designed for parent viewing, some parents watched with their children, an idea that we will share with families next year. Also, we plan to more prominently state that parents can request the video for another evening so that more videos are returned within a day or two. Finally, we will survey teachers next year so that their feedback can be included to improve the project.

District funds dedicated to parent involvement support PIRC. School PRCs generate funds from grants, sponsorships, and a variety of fundraising efforts. About 10% of PIRC and PRC resource materials are donated.

The cost of the videos was about \$625. Planning for each school year requires about 12 hours of PIRC staff time and about one hour of meeting time for teachers. Those who preview several videos invest more time. Composing the letter to parents and designing the survey can take several hours; modifying them to fit different videos requires only minutes. After the planning meeting, contact between teachers and PIRC is brief and usually conducted by e-mail or phone.

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