
GET-TO-KNOW-YOU ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Collinwood Middle and High School

Cleveland, Ohio

“MMM good!” exclaimed parents, grandparents, students, Board Members, community representatives, teachers, and administrative staff as they enjoyed ice cream at Collinwood Middle and High School’s Get-To-Know-You Ice Cream Social held on the second Thursday of September each year, from 6:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.

The Action Team for Partnerships implemented the Get-To-Know-You Ice Cream Social to start the school year positively by giving parents, staff, and the community an opportunity to socialize with each other. The Ice Cream Social also provided an opportunity to share information about Collinwood’s academic programs, Cleveland Municipal School District updates and materials, library resources, and Cleveland Scholarship Programs that would be helpful to incoming students as well as returning students and families. Previous data from parents expressed the desire for more fun and informative gatherings. The Ice Cream Social met this request, and offered an activity to establish stronger communication between families and the school.

The first year, registration began at 5:30 p.m. with a live broadcast from TV 8 during a 5:00 p.m. news broadcast. News reporters encouraged families to come to the Ice Cream Social to hear about the educational plans and activities that the school and School, Family, and Community Partnership Action Team had planned for the upcoming school year. Principal, William Martin gave a live interview, informing parents and the community about Collinwood’s plans for a successful school year, new staff changes, new programs, and new rules and regulations created by District staff, and a state law regulating student attendance.

Parents, students, and their younger siblings visited the school. Other guests included the school’s Regional Superintendent, Business Partner GE Liaison, a reporter from the *Sun Scoop Journal Newspaper*, and Cleveland Municipal School District Board Members including the Board Chairman. Attendees received folders containing:

- Tutoring information;
- A list of partnership meeting dates;
- A required reading list for students based on new English and Language Arts academic standards;
- A copy of the school mission statement;

- The school Alma Mater;
- Volunteer and Question forms; and
- A school bell schedule.

The folder also included an evaluation sheet to gather feedback from families on how they enjoyed the event; what additional activities they would like to see included; and to invite them to join the Action Team for Partnerships.

Teamwork was the key. Committees divided the work, and Action Team meetings kept everyone informed of the activities and progress. Student leaders recruited student volunteers to act as hosts, to plan and develop the event, and to perform before guests. Other members of the Action Team developed and organized handout materials, found a vendor to supply the ice cream, and manned the information and sign-in table. Support from the Cleveland Municipal School District Community Relations Department staff was instrumental in getting media coverage by issuing a press release and securing TV coverage.

The Ice Cream Social cost about \$500. The cost was offset by donations and in-kind service. The Cleveland Municipal School District provided additional resources including donated materials and incentives for parents and families attending the event. The Cleveland Summit on Education provided paper for printing materials and flyers. Collinwood's Business and Community Partner, G.E. Lighting Corporation under the leadership of their in-house Education Liaison, paid for postage to mail flyers home. Families also received complimentary light bulbs from G.E. Lighting along with other door prizes.

More teachers participated in the event this year. The principal stated that the Get-To-Know-You Ice Cream Social will remain one of the kick-off events each year to make student transitions easier, and to foster early communication between staff and families. Collaborative efforts and sustained commitment have made the Ice Cream Social an annual promising partnership practice to benefit the students and families of Collinwood Middle School.

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