
LIFT OFF: CATCH THE TIGER'S TAIL

Taylor Elementary School

Cincinnati, Ohio

The beginning of a new school year can be filled with trepidation for any new or returning student. The Taylor Elementary Lift Off: Catch the Tiger's Tail, provides a comfortable and coordinated link for students and their families to learn about the school environment and available community support services.

The school mails invitation letters along with a survey for parents to complete regarding student interests and goals. Upon arrival at the Lift Off, families go to their student's homeroom to meet the teacher and receive a Taylor Tiger folder containing pertinent school information. The teacher gives participants a Taylor Tiger nametag and a tiger's tail. A grade-level specific clue directs them around to other areas of the school where they meet other faculty members and view videos highlighting school activities. At each destination, a tiger sticker is applied to the tail, and the family receives another clue to follow. The last clue directs them to the picnic area where they turn in their tiger tail to receive a tiger key chain with the school's vision statement inscribed on the back. A light picnic follows, and the middle school jazz band performs. A Pull the Tiger's Tail booth allows students to win donated school supplies. A message board is available for volunteer sign-up and school and community support information.

The Lift Off program helps the school and community form comfortable relationships within the school environment. The Community Relations Board (Action Team) at Taylor Elementary connects parents, family support groups, teachers, and business partners to coordinate special school events. This committee, along with the Taylor Elementary Student and Staff Committees, coordinates all of the Lift Off activities. Information about Lift Off is shared with area churches, businesses, and childcare centers that can assist with distributing dates and times of Lift Off and the beginning of school. In addition to meeting school staff, families have the opportunity to meet school board members, township law enforcement, and a state representative at the Lift Off event.

The Lift Off event produces results for everyone involved. For families, it helps build confidence, which in turn assures good connections to available school and community resources. Addressing parent concerns involving curriculum, childcare, and scheduling early in the school year has helped to increase attendance at Taylor Elementary events. Higher

attendance at the Lift Off event guarantees higher involvement in all of the other activities held throughout the year. This has been confirmed by the attendance sheets used at every family involvement activity. The Lift Off also allows new and returning teachers the opportunity to start the year with clear expectations and goals for what the school plans to focus on for the coming year. Teachers have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the support service information that is available at the Lift Off. The event has even inspired community businesses to take a more active role working with Taylor Elementary.

Taylor Elementary School's Lift Off: Catch the Tiger's Tail provides a fun and creative opportunity for families, school staff, and community members to communicate at the beginning of the school year. Most importantly, it offers potential benefit to students all year long by enhancing school-family-community partnerships.

Karen Heyob, Teacher
(513) 825-3000