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## **FAMILY NIGHTS OUT FOR FUN AND LEARNING**

### **Glenville High School**

#### **Cleveland, Ohio**

At Family Nights Out for Fun and Learning teachers inform and involve families of students who are required to pass the Ninth Grade Ohio Proficiency Test (OPT). The primary purpose of Family Nights Out is to establish two-way communication between the school and the home. The teachers provide parents with resources so that they can help their students prepare to take the tests in October and March. They guide parents to help students feel confident about the test and not overwhelmed by this high-stakes graduation requirement. Parents learn about the high school's practices, their children's status on the OPT, and what they can do at home to prepare for the test. The motto used to garner support is: "The will to succeed begins with the will to prepare."

After analyzing the results of the Starting Points Inventory (see *Handbook for Action*, p. 122), the Glenville High School (GHS) Partners Action Team chose an evening program to address proficiency test preparation. From 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., parents, students, and family members attended user-friendly evening workshops to learn about test requirements, analyze individual results, take practice tests, and review the take out packets with interactive assignments for home study.

A team of twelve teachers presented strategies as games. Representatives from various social service agencies such as the Council for Economic Opportunity, Cleveland Scholarship Program, Inc., the Glenville Recreation Center, and the city's Healthy Family/Healthy Start assisted with proficiency study. The program also offered vision screenings and tips on stress reduction, nutrition, and time management. Administrators and counselors shared positive school news and invited families to visit the school at anytime. Members of the Parent-Teacher Association, student volunteers, and GHS Partners Action Team helped with registration, refreshments, displays, and general hospitality. Parents received awards for being Parent/Guardian Encouragers. Before leaving, parents read *The Parents' Pledge of Responsibility*, completed a survey indicating how they can be involved with school activities, and evaluated their experience at the event.

Teachers encouraged students to understand the importance of assuming personal responsibility for their own learning, and they also recommended that parents monitor homework activities, in particular, to prepare for the OPT. Interactive assignments used the scavenger hunt method

whereby students could not complete the problem solving without consulting parents and teachers for translation of secret codes. The students hunted for agreement of solutions. The Math Club produced magnetized, laminated refrigerator cards with proficiency problems for additional practice at home.

In the 1999-2000 school year, 15% of the targeted students attended the Family Nights Out with family members. The district reported that GHS had the highest attendance of test-takers during 1999-2000. Since 1998, the number of parent/family encouragers increased; and the number of ninth and tenth grade students completing the graduation test requirements has increased. Eighty-six percent of parents attending the Family Night Out in April 2000, when responding to a survey for parents, reported that they knew how to help their children study, and 75% felt their children were prepared for the OPT.

Realizing that families rarely have time to study together and seldom are home at the same time, Glenville High School teachers believe in parent education and engagement in students' learning. The Family Nights Out program embraces the motto by John Bowlby, "If a community values its children, it must cherish their parents."

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