
ANNUAL BRAINSTORMING MEETING

Highlands Elementary School

Naperville, Illinois

To continuously improve the School, Family, and Community Partnership program, the team moved its annual brainstorming activity to the first team meeting of the year. The reason for this change was three-fold:

1. To get the creative juices going right at the beginning of the year. In the past, the team always discussed new ideas during the last meeting of the year in May. Since both parents and teachers were trying to wrap things up for the summer, attention was not focused on the upcoming school year. This year the team tapped into the high energy level and focus that comes with a new school year.
2. To help new team members feel comfortable talking in front of the team and discussing ideas. A brainstorming session provided a low-risk environment that encourages everyone to speak. Regardless of tenure or position, all members could contribute something—no expertise is required and fresh ideas are valued.
3. To identify 1-2 ideas to be developed over the course of the year. In order to continue to expand programs, the team wanted to generate a prioritized list of new program ideas that could be updated throughout the year.

Moving the brainstorming process to the beginning of the year was a huge success. The team generated fourteen new program ideas, and everyone contributed to the discussion. In fact, the top two ideas were implemented during the course of the year, and one of the activities was selected as an annual best practice. The net result is that everyone has a sense of ownership of the team's programs, and the brainstorming activity helped generate enthusiasm and build positive team dynamics at the start of the year.

Jane Wernette, Action Team Member

(630) 420-6335