
PIE: PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

Long Beach Unified School District

Long Beach, California

The Parents as Learning Partners program developed an innovative way to involve more families in their children's education. At the beginning of the school year, each family received a PIE chart divided into twelve slices. Each time a parent attended a school activity (parent workshop, Back to School Night, parent-teacher conference, concert, or other event) she/he received a sticker to apply to the PIE chart. When all twelve slices were filled, families returned the charts to the school's Parent Coordinator for a pie or a pie gift certificate. Parents were encouraged to post the charts on their refrigerators to remind everyone at home of the additional benefits of attending school events—dessert. Middle and high school parents received tickets for monthly pie drawings each time they attended an activity. Some schools listed the winning families' names in the Title I newsletter.

Local bakeries, restaurants, and pizzerias (pizzas are pies too) donated most of the pies. Other donations came from the schools' staffs, District Office personnel, and even Board of Education members. Coordinators asked teachers at each school to bring in one pie gift certificate from a favorite baker or restaurant, and they gave PIE: Partners in Education certificates to teachers to hang in their classrooms. Businesses also received framed certificates to display.

This activity was a great way to involve parents; determine which activities were most attended; and develop a parent involvement database for each school using the information from the completed PIE charts. The level of involvement increased by approximately one-third, even though most parents did not attend twelve activities to receive a pie. Parents who attended at least three activities received a PIE: Partners in Education certificate. Already, parents are asking if they can try to earn a pie next year.

One program challenge is to insure that parents get one slice of pie for each type of activity, e.g., one sticker for volunteering, one sticker for reading to a child at home, one sticker for attending a PTA meeting. Next year the pie slices will be color-coded to indicate the six types of involvement. The color-coded pie slices will make it easier to see the types of involvement and illustrate that excellent family involvement means participating in a variety of meaningful activities.

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