

Bring Your Parent to Lunch

*Occupational Training Center
Buffalo, New York*

Once a month, a day is set aside at the Occupational Training Center so that students with special needs can meet their parents for lunch and learning in the school cafeteria. Everyone brings a lunch from home. Students prepare a dessert of cookies and coffee during home and careers class to serve at the Bring Your Parent to Lunch meetings. The monthly lunches give parents an opportunity to connect with each other, with students, and with the school staff. Each luncheon features a guest speaker.

As parents arrive, the principal welcomes everyone and introduces the speaker. Guest speakers are community members who give presentations on a variety of topics that interest both students and parents. For example, a representative from the Young Adult Life Transition Program provided information about an adaptive college program for students with developmental disabilities. After each presentation, parents and students ask questions about the services or community resources that the guest speaker highlighted. The presentation and follow-up questions often spark lunch conversations between students and parents.

This monthly PTO-sponsored activity was developed to encourage parent involvement to support the student responsibility goals in the school improvement plan. The PTO publicizes the luncheon by sending monthly invitations home with the students and posting the invitations in the faculty room.

Bring Your Parent to Lunch is building partnerships between the school, families, and community to support students in the Commu-

nity-Based Special Education program. The event is a wonderful way for students and parents to share time together at school.

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