

Father's Forum

*Iowa Maple Elementary School
Cleveland, Ohio*

Members of Iowa Maple Elementary's School Parent Organization (SPO) were concerned with the low attendance of men at monthly SPO meetings. They were worried that fathers may not feel welcomed or needed in the SPO. In order to encourage father participation, and to demonstrate appreciation for fathers' roles in their children's lives, Iowa Maple's SPO hosted a Father's Forum.

The Father's Forum brought councilmen and community agencies to speak to fathers and address topics of interest to them. The councilmen addressed the importance of parental involvement in education, and different ways fathers, especially, could be more involved in their children's schooling. Representatives from community agencies set up tables and distributed fliers about their services, and talked informally with the fathers on a one-to-one basis. SPO members served a meal for all attendees and raffled off door prizes.

The SPO publicized the Father's Forum through fliers to parents, businesses, and community agencies. They also made follow-up phone calls. Iowa Maple's corporate partner donated \$300 to fund the event. Parents helped with setting up the fair and serving those who attended.

Sixty-five fathers attended this event, surprising many of the school members who were worried about low turn out. Many of the men reported that they thought meetings were only for the mothers, but were encouraged to attend the forum because the activity was targeted specifically to them. Fathers left the forum aware of the wealth of resources available

to them and inspired to play a greater role in their children's education.

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