

New Parent Initiative

*Highlands Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois*

An annual school survey at Highlands Elementary School demonstrated a need for better communication with new parents. Highlands had 40 new families that relocated to Naperville and 28 new kindergarten families entering the school. Highlands' School Family Community Partnership (SFCP) Team reviewed the survey results and brainstormed ways to improve communications with these families so that they might become more active in their children's school. The New Parent Initiative helped parents help their children transition more smoothly to their new school.

The SFCP Team obtained the names of new families from the school secretary in order to create mailing labels on the computer. Team members sent personalized letters to the new families for all school events. To ensure clarity of all letters, a team member who is also a new parent reviewed all of the communications before they were distributed.

In February, the SFCP Team hosted a coffee for the new parents with the principal, instructional coordinator, SFCP co-chairs, and the Home and School president and vice president. They scheduled a morning and evening coffee to accommodate working and non-working parents. The local newspaper wrote an article about the event one week in advance.

The coffee was a success. The SFCP Team kept track of new parent attendance at events and noted a significant increase. The principal got to know the new families in a relaxed and informal setting. Parents felt welcomed and informed, and thanked the SFCP Team for inviting them to the coffee. One parent said, "It is so nice to have the opportunity

to meet the school leaders and parent leaders. I was able to ask specific questions since we just began at Highlands in January."

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