

Family Involvement Events

*Chappell Elementary School
Green Bay, Wisconsin*

Chappell Elementary School offers free family activities every month. The array of events is enticing: movie nights, chili bingo, holiday dinners, family photo nights, Mardi Gras dances, costume balls, roller skating, and art fairs. These events get families involved in the school, help them get acquainted with teachers and staff, and provide activities families can do together. Each evening includes a family dinner along with a free gift, such as a book or family photo.

The family events help the school work toward its goal of increasing family participation. Previous family involvement activities received positive feedback, so the school decided to do one each month. Families are surveyed to determine interests and needs. Chappell tries to vary the activities to cater to the interests of all families and keep the monthly activities new and exciting.

The school tracks family registration to add to Title I data and evaluate the popularity of each event. After each event, the staff, students, and parents brainstorm ideas for improvement; surveys also ask each family to rate the events and make suggestions. Throughout the year, the school posts an idea board in the staff lounge, where staff can write what they liked about each event and what they would like to see improved.

The school publicized the events through fliers, posters, and its newsletter. Teachers also added a sticky-note reminder to each student's planner marking the night of the event.

The total cost was approximately \$1,500, which the PTO helps cover through fundraising. The school also receives donations of food, books, and prizes from families and the community. Administrators, staff, students, and community helpers volunteer their time to organize the events. The school asks parents to bring a dessert to share.

As the family nights increase parent involvement, the number of negative behavior incidents and suspensions has steadily declined, while test scores and attendance rates have risen. Chappell's family involvement events have led to a stronger and more unified school and community—communication between students, staff, and families is better than ever. After all, as one staff member noted, "It is fun to get the teachers and families together in a positive and fun environment."

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