

Mother's Day Tea Party

*Pennsylvania School for the Deaf
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

Each May, the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf honors its students' mothers with a Mother's Day Tea Party. This event recognizes the mothers' contributions, provides an opportunity for the mothers to visit their children at school, and sets an example for the students so they can appreciate what their mothers do for them. The initiative ties in with the School Improvement Plan (SIP) goal of increasing family and community participation.

Historically, the mothers of children at the School for the Deaf have been very active in the education of their special needs children through conferences and sign language classes. Previously, the school created "Bring Your Father to School Day," an initiative to encourage more fathers to become involved. Some students with single mothers, however, pointed out that the school did not do anything like that for mothers. In response, the school created an event that would honor the mothers who were already highly involved with the school.

Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) members, parent volunteers, and several students helped by preparing food, setting up, and serving. A panel discussion, with the theme "Advocating for Your Deaf Child," followed the luncheon. A school counselor moderated this panel. The school also employed Spanish and American Sign Language interpreters so that everyone in the audience could appreciate the discussion.

A local flower shop gave the school a discount on roses that the students presented to their mothers. A photographer took a picture

of each child presenting a rose to his or her mother in front of a hand-painted backdrop and silver tea display. The school later framed each photo as a Mother's Day gift.

The \$400 cost budgeted for the tea party was well worth it. Students had a chance to show their appreciation for their mothers, paving the way for the children to celebrate Mother's Day with their families. The mothers enjoyed the lunch and had a chance to talk with other parents about how to become better advocates for their children. The event also helped parents connect with teachers. It provided an opportunity for the staff and children to thank the mothers in person, and left each mother with a beautiful keepsake and fond memories.

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