

## Parent-Principal Coffees

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*Steeple Run Elementary School  
Naperville, Illinois*

Parents and administrators at Steeple Run Elementary School took a hint from other schools in their district on how to improve communication. When they heard about Parent-Principal Coffees at a district celebration of best practices, they decided such get-togethers might work for them.

With a new principal, the School Family Community Partnership (SFCP) team decided the coffees were a good way for families to meet the principal and a good time to renew their efforts at increasing volunteerism and home-school communication—one of the school's improvement goals. They also found the relaxed atmosphere of a coffee in someone's home an inviting way to get acquainted and share information about the school.

The coffees were scheduled for March, April, and May. The principal announced them in his newsletter and follow-up announcements appeared in the school newspaper and take-home fliers. Parents were invited to host the events.

The coffees began with introductions and then moved to a question-and-answer session between the principal and parents. The families were invited to share suggestions, concerns, and ideas about the school.

Nearly 100 parents attended the three coffees. Informal feedback was positive, with parents asking that the SFCP team repeat the activity next year. "Thank you for having this coffee; I learned a lot of new things about school," said one parent. "This was great! I am so glad you started these," commented another.

Based on such reactions, the SFCP team is "hopeful that the turnout will be even better next year." Plans are already being made for fall coffees. One thing the organizers will do differently: more publicity, to get the word out and bring in more parents.

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