

Information Fair

*Lincoln Elementary School
Wausau, Wisconsin*

Lincoln Elementary School recently discovered a way to capitalize on its traditionally well-attended Parent-Teacher Conferences. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) used the popular event to disseminate information that promotes and reinforces healthy living habits. Community agencies, the PTO and school district representatives were all involved in the school's new Information Fair.

On the day of the Parent-Teacher Conferences, community representatives gave families information about health, nutrition and safety. The practice tied into district-wide and school health and wellness goals, including good nutrition, daily physical activity and parental involvement in the school. The fair was one of several activities the school conducted in the 2006-07 school year to help support these goals.

Many individuals contributed to the fair. The ATP coordinated the event by arranging for agencies to attend, securing donations and creating a welcoming atmosphere and area for those presenting and attending. Other teachers were helpful in promoting the event in their classrooms, as well as offering suggestions for booths that would be useful to the students and their families. Students encouraged their parents to attend and community members gave their time and resources to inform the parents and students.

The school promoted the fair through newsletters and fliers sent home with every student. As a result, more than 150 parents and caregivers attended. ATP members noted that the fair raised parental awareness of academics, health issues and school involvement, and enhanced school and community connections by creating a meaningful information exchange.

Students also enjoyed having their parents visit the school. "It is so neat to show my mom what I do at school!" said one of the many students in attendance.

Parents also raved about this addition to conferences. "It's a great opportunity to have a look at after-school enrichment programs, as well as the breakfast program. We knew these things were available, but never actually considered them until now," said a parent. "We never knew there was so much sugar in all the pop we drink at home," added another parent after visiting one of the information booths.

The ATP's advice to others planning to sponsor similar events is to have enough space for a large crowd and to make sure that the exhibits are finished at least 30 minutes before opening to accommodate early attendees. The school will heed its own advice when they host Information Fair again. The ATP also intends to invite more community agencies to provide parents with additional information on health, wellness, and to strengthen home, school and community relationships.

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