

TECHNOLOGY 4 PARENTS

PARKWAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

Parkway Elementary School knows that one key to student success is goal-linked parental involvement. To keep improving students' reading and math skills and related achievement test scores, the school went to parents to offer its Technology 4 Parents program. This is a series of classes to help computer-challenged parents use technology to help increase their children's academic success.

Parkway Elementary offers technology education to all students and knew that the children were gaining important computer skills. They also recognized that many students' families did not have comparable computer skills. Some did not own a computer. Some left the use of the computer to their youngsters.

The school conducted a survey to measure parents' interest in improving their technological savvy. After receiving a resounding "yes" from the parents, the school's computer specialist designed a curriculum that would help parents increase their computer know-how.

Flyers about the free classes were sent home that outlined the topics and skills that would be covered. The district's Media and Communication Department funded the program.

Each class was conducted twice—once in the morning, and once in the evening—to accommodate parents' busy schedules. In addition, the school offered babysitting services to encourage parents to attend.

The first classes covered basic topics. Participants learned the names and functions of parts of the computer, word processing skills, and techniques for surfing the Internet. One grandparent commented, "I've really learned a great deal about the basics to get started on the computer...[I'm] hopeful to attend more classes."

The second session covered more advanced topics. This included information on Google, how to set up G-mail accounts, and how to use e-mail and Google Docs features. The next class included useful topics on Internet safety and how to protect their children (and themselves) on the Internet.

The final session presented a series of useful educational websites, including the school's Parent Portal, with information on how to access and use the resources on these sites. The number of parents attending Technology 4 Parents increased as the workshop series continued. Parents praised the usefulness of the classes. As one regular attendee stated, "My experience with the [first] three sessions was a great adventure. All classes were well-taught and well-explained."

Parkway's planning committee attributed the success of the classes, in part, to a new name—Technology 4 Parents. This replaced an earlier, more mundane title, Adult Beginning Computer Classes. The leaders also improved the schedule, with classes held over three weeks instead of two months. The concentrated timeline increased participants learning and remembering skills from class to class. The leaders for partnerships expect that more parents will become tech-savvy through Technology 4 Parents. This will help them access the sites that the school and district use to communicate information about student learning.

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Type 1

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS