



Student and Guest Speaker Night

Adapted from "Planning for Parent Engagement: A Guidebook for Parents and Schools" developed by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education

Things to do Ahead of Time:

- ✓ Two or three months before you plan to hold the event, have a meeting to discuss possible guest speakers and dates.
- ✓ You could do an informal survey to find out about experts within your community. Possible speakers might include: local politicians, historians, business owners, veterans, community health nurses, cultural leaders, hobbyists, local athletes, or newspaper and television personalities. Once you have set a date, send out invitations to potential guest speakers.
- ✓ Once you have confirmation from your speaker, advertise and send out invitations for the event.
- ✓ Meet with teachers to recruit students to read some of their own work following the guest speaker. Make sure to have a variety of grades represented.

Recommended Time: Weeknight evening; allow approximately two hours for this event

Recommended Location: School gymnasium or auditorium

Recommend Materials:

- ✓ Audio and video equipment
- ✓ Refreshments
- ✓ Podium
- ✓ Chairs for the audience
- ✓ Refreshments, coffee, water (optional)

Set-Up:

- ✓ Show up early to set up chairs and equipment.
- ✓ Have volunteers greet parents at the door and hand out programs for the event.
- ✓ As participants enter, have them sign-in with their name and contact information if they wish to be invited to more events in the future.
- ✓ Make sure someone is available to greet the speaker at the front of the building and direct him or her to the room where the session will be taking place. Have a podium or stand set up for the speaker to stand at and read from his or her notes.
- ✓ You may choose to serve refreshments during the evening; a short intermission between the guest speaker and student readers serves as an optimal time for enjoying refreshments.
- ✓ Once the short break for refreshments is over, have students do readings of their own work or classroom material to share with the audience.
- ✓ Be sure to thank your guest speaker with a thank you note or small gift.



Tips for Recruiting Volunteers

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- ✓ Make the ‘ask’ small.
- ✓ Make the ‘ask’ personal.
- ✓ Ask for help early in the school year.
- ✓ Ask new parents when their child is starting school.
- ✓ Recognize volunteer efforts often. Personal notes from the principal or a parent leader and/or public thanks at meetings and events go a long way to reinforcing how much volunteerism is appreciated in your school community.
- ✓ Welcome parents throughout the year. At school meetings, assign someone the pleasure of greeting new parents to the school or the meeting. Use nametags as much as possible.
- ✓ Share the workload. If the same volunteers do most of the work, others think that they are not needed.
- ✓ Develop networks to draw on the skills of others and link families of diverse cultures and backgrounds. Limit the number of times parents are asked to volunteer.
- ✓ Link volunteer activities to schoolwork.
- ✓ Plan and coordinate who will solicit support, which community partners and local businesses to approach and how often to ask for support.
- ✓ Once volunteers are comfortable and successful in one task they are more likely to help again.