

Parent Engagement Activities

Parent Information Night

Importance of Parental Outreach

Hosting a parent information night is a great public relations activity to include in your SkillsUSA marketing activities. Parents are front-line program advocates and a great resource for volunteer and financial support. Parental and family involvement is also vitally important to the academic and career success of students.

Parent information night will enable you to reach out to parents in a personal way while bringing key stakeholders together in one place. Your target audiences should include:

- All students enrolled in your program's classes (SkillsUSA members and non-members)
- Parents of all students current enrolled in your classes
- Parents of children you have strategically identified based on talents, interests and skills who could greatly benefit from enrollment in your classes and membership in SkillsUSA

Value to Your Program

A parent information night is your opportunity to showcase:

- Classes offered in your Skilled and Technical Sciences programs of study
- The mission and goals of SkillsUSA
- Activities and competitive events in which SkillsUSA members can become involved
- Opportunities for parents and other family members to get involved in your SkillsUSA program

Why it Works

Parent information night is a proven method because you are able to reach out to both members and parents in a single event. Most parents are overextended and overwhelmed as they try to juggle one or more jobs and parenting duties. They are spread thin, but most are still eager to connect to their children in a meaningful way through their activities.

By offering information about SkillsUSA and your Skilled and Technical Sciences classes during a fun, student-led event, you can efficiently generate support for your program activities and build a base of advocate support, which is especially valuable when additional resources are needed or budget constraints threaten programs.

Steps to Success

Essential to success is to make this a member-led activity. You can provide guidance, but allow your members to design the event agenda, lead the activities, and follow-up in meaningful ways with everyone in attendance (and even those unable to attend).

Form a Parent Information Night Planning Committee

1. Form a planning committee that includes a committee chairperson or co-chairs and members who are responsible, who will follow-through with assignments, and have an interest in this activity.
2. Clearly define the roles, responsibilities and deadlines for completing all responsibilities.

Planning Committee Responsibilities

1. Choose a date and time.
 - Avoid school event and holiday conflicts.
 - Schedule the activity to allow parents time to get home after work and have a meal. Survey your members (and event the parents) to determine the most advantageous timeframe.
2. Choose the location.
 - Decide on whether a classroom, cafeteria area, common area, auditorium or multiple locations will be needed (such as those needed if you are going to host a facilities tour).
 - Consider the size of the audience, ability to see and hear the presenters and presentations, and ability to use the equipment necessary for the information sharing.
 - Room must be large enough to comfortably hold the maximum anticipated number of participants.
 - Acoustics of the room must allow the audience to clearly hear speakers or presentations. Note: Cafeteria areas usually have poor acoustics, even though they may have adequate space and seating.
3. Determine presentation equipment and technology needs.
 - Equipment needed may include:
 - Microphone(s)
 - Sound system or external speakers
 - Computer and projector
 - Screens
 - Internet access
 - Check out the lighting system so that lights can be dimmed if presentations (PowerPoint, videos) are to be used.
4. Plan the program agenda.
 - Choose the host or emcee
 - Determine who will present information
 - Chapter advisor(s)
 - Chapter officers
 - Members (competitive event participants or winners, committee chairs)
 - Determine the key messages you want to convey and how to best convey them.
 - Messages that parents may find compelling include:
 - SkillsUSA is an integral part of the total career-technical education program, not just another club.

- Members gain valuable experiences in leadership, teamwork, citizenship and character development to enhance the skills and knowledge gained in the classroom.
 - SkillsUSA builds and reinforces self-confidence, work attitudes and communication skills through engagement in the activities and competitive events offered.
 - Decide how to best present those messages (presentations, testimonials, videos).
 - Decide on budget for refreshments (if any) and choose refreshments.
5. Invite and advertise!
- Create a formal invitation card or letter or flyer to send to members' and students' parents
 - An RSVP date and contact person should be included so you can plan for adequate materials and refreshments.
 - Send a press release to local media.
 - Create a web ad or invitation to be placed on your chapter's home page or the school's website and calendar of events.
 - Follow-up with phone calls or e-mails to invitees reminding them of the event.
6. Host the event.
- Have members positioned at the entrances to greet and direct participants. Make sure all SkillsUSA members are wearing professional attire, including official SkillsUSA attire, to project a positive image.
 - Have a sign-in sheet for guests to record contact information (name, e-mail, phone number).
 - Provide SkillsUSA information and marketing materials to every participant (flyers, brochures, handouts and promotional materials such as pens, pencils and other "freebies").
 - Keep the program flowing.
 - Presentations should be short (five, 10 or 15-minute increments).
 - Incorporate some type of activity to engage the parents.
 - "Scavenger hunt" to find specific things in classrooms, labs or facilities.
 - "Fill-in-the-blank quiz" with key points to fill in what they will learn.
 - Have a way for parents to volunteer their time and expertise (use a volunteer information card or form).
 - Take pictures! Clear, high-resolution, action-oriented digital images are powerful ways to market your chapter through news releases, displays, websites and newsletters.
 - Issue a news release about the success of the event to local media.
 - Thank all participants and invite them to the next suitable chapter activity.

7. Review and evaluate the event.
 - Revisit your goals and expectations for the parent information night.
 - What went as planned? What didn't?
 - What would you change, eliminate or add to improve the event?
 - Record this information in writing to assist next year's event planners.

Resources available on the SkillsUSA website:

- SkillsUSA Chapter Activity Planning Tool - <http://www.skillsusa.org/educators/cap.shtml>
- SkillsUSA Fact Sheet - <http://skillsusa.org/about/factsheet.shtml>
- SkillsUSA Partner Guides (4 and 10 page booklets) - <http://skillsusa.org/supporters/bandi.shtml>
- Presentation for Business and Industry Partners (PowerPoint) - <http://skillsusa.org/supporters/bandi.shtml>