

Back to School Night Ideas

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Umbrella ideas for BTS

- This is the only time you will have most of the parents' attention. Use it for REALLY, REALLY important information. Any information that can be effectively delivered via email SHOULD NOT be discussed at length during BTS.
- The Internet exists. Conduct your BTS as if it does.
- BTS is the time to demonstrate the intangibles:
 - Sets the tone for your entire year with the parents of your new students, and opens the door to trust and cooperation.
 - Make your Back-to-School Night presentation as similar to a NORMAL classroom experience as possible.
 - Your goal: Parents will say there is no other place they'd rather have their child than your room.
 - Your goal: Parents will say to their children, "I saw his BTS and I know him. What you are saying just doesn't sound like Mr. H."

- Three goals for teachers at BTS:
 - Demonstrate that you love their child and the curriculum. Make the parents believe that there is no better place for their child than your room.
 - Establish how communication will occur. Email. Website. Zangle.
 - Create a relationship between Teacher and Parent.

Creating your presentation

- Make your presentation as class-like as possible. Give parents an idea of who you are as a teacher.
- STAY POSITIVE. For example, focus on your high expectations, not on what you'll do to the children if they don't meet your expectations.
- If you must use notes, don't fumble with them. Rather, post your agenda on the board.
- Pass out 3x5 cards for parents to write down their burning questions. You can answer them if you have extra time (block teachers) and post Q&A online.
- Things to include in your presentation:
 - Introduce yourself: your first and last name.
 - How long you have taught.
 - Degrees earned.
 - Other responsibilities at the school.
 - Teaching philosophy: All children can succeed! Collaborative. Problem-based. Constructivist, etc.
 - Clearly describe the roles of parent, teacher, student.
 - Establish an open line of communication. Email, voicemail, Google phone number, written letters, phone calls, etc.
 - Show your website URL.

Prior to BTS

- During the first week of school, practice the first and last names of your students - feel entirely comfortable pronouncing all of them by Back to School Night.
- Send home Back-to-School Night announcements.
- Post as much student work as possible around the room.
- Prominently display the units of study for the year.
- Can videos of students be incorporated into your talk?
- Create the notes for your BTS presentation. (See "Creating your presentation").
- Talk with colleague on site to get an idea of the school's culture for BTS.

The Day of BTS

- If you do not have time to go home between school and Back to School Night, bring clothes to change into. You'll feel better if you have taken some time to freshen up and change. Look very professional and look like a strong leader.
- Straighten up your classroom - make it look organized and inviting. Hide the extras piles of paper and empty the trash. Make the classroom look like students are coming in...not parents. Keep the day's notes on the board.
- Write your BTS agenda on the board, just as you'd write the day's agenda for your students. Rather than writing your notes on paper, consider using the BTS agenda you've put on the board.
- Find quiet time immediately prior to BTS to relax. Visualize how the evening will go. Practice portions of your talk.

During the evening

- As parents are entering the room, make eye contact with as many parents as possible. Shake hands. Connect them with their child. Make a quick, passing comment about their child: "Ah she sits here." "I'd love to have a room full of students like him." "Man, that kid likes to tell jokes!"
- Be cheerful, energetic, and positive.
- Activate plan for getting all email addresses from parents. Ideally, you should already have nearly all email addresses. At BTS you will hopefully get the last few. Clipboard? 3x5 cards?