

School-Family
CONNECTIONS
Support
CREATIVITY



**Family Engagement Guide
for Colorful Connections**



Learning

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Crayola's mission is to help parents and educators raise creatively alive children. We thank the tireless leaders of Parent-Teacher Groups across the country who share our passion for nurturing children's creativity. Your collaboration with the educators in your learning community enriches students' experiences and guides them towards a bright future filled with possibilities. We appreciate the educators and school district liaisons who share our collective passion for bringing families into their learning communities and partnering with parents as co-educators of children.



This guide is one of many resources that Crayola provides to help Parent-Teacher Groups with the shared mission of supporting children's education and engaging families as key members of learning communities. For more resources that can help you and your organizations' members, visit [Crayola.com/ParentTeacherGroups](https://www.crayola.com/ParentTeacherGroups)

1. Investing in Creativity

Creativity is an essential life skill that helps everyone reach their full potential. People who lead fulfilled lives are also savvy in problem solving and confident in expressing their ideas. They learn from mistakes and keep an open mind to new experiences.

Parent-Teacher Group leaders are creative role models who immerse themselves in their children's schools to help students and educators feel optimistic, secure, and valued.



There are many myths and misunderstandings about creativity. Let's focus on the facts!

FACTS

CORRECTING MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Creativity is an important skill that employers look for in every employee. Creativity is essential for problem solving and innovation. Creativity is needed in every career. It is THE best way to help students become future ready.	Creativity is not just needed in arts-related jobs such as painting, music, fashion, and theatre. Creative thinking improves job performance, job satisfaction, and interpersonal relationships—regardless of occupation.
Everyone is creative—in their own way. Nurturing creativity empowers everyone to reach full potential.	Stop the myth that only a few lucky people are born creative—the “either you have it or you don’t” assumption. Everyone is creative and can boost their creative confidence. Creativity can be nurtured, no matter your age or interests. Embrace your strengths!
Creative behaviors can be taught and nurtured every day during simple creative moments. Parents and teachers should encourage kids to do these five things to help them be successful: 1. Come up with unique ideas. 2. Keep an open mind that puts your imagination into action. 3. Be curious and ask questions. 4. Consider many possibilities as you try new ways of doing things. 5. Learn from mistakes and strive for continuous improvement.	Don't believe that creativity requires special talents. Don't fall for the myth that parents who aren't confident in their own creativity can't help kids build their creative confidence. Learn with your kids!

2. Creative Moments: Why and How

Albert Einstein said, “**Imagination is more important than knowledge.**”

The vast majority of parents agree. In fact:

- 96% of parents say creativity is important for society as a whole and their family in particular.
- 92% of parents say creative experiences in childhood provide life-long benefits.
- But only 55% of parents feel they themselves are creative enough to support their children’s creativity.

This lack of confidence and lack of support for kids’ creativity needs to change!

Parents can support their children’s creativity by asking questions, honoring their original thoughts, and being curious—together!



Enjoy creative moments with children anywhere, anytime. It does not require special supplies or adding more to busy schedules. Instead, weave creative moments into everyday routines. **Ask “what if...?” questions** while preparing dinner. Have kids draw a menu for the meal or sketch a recipe for food that is being cooked. Or ask them to arrange a colorful assortment of veggies or fruit to serve as an appetizer.

Everyone can add more creative moments to the day. Whether it is making up new stories at bedtime or pretending that cups in the bathtub are submarines, just playfully use what you have on hand and **wonder, imagine, and create** together. Nurture children’s creativity anytime you are together—walking home, in a waiting room, riding the bus, or stuck in traffic. Listen to kids’ ideas. When they get stumped ask them how they would solve the problem. Be playful and imaginative yourself.

These simple fun creative moments could be enjoyed together:

- Invent new endings for favorite stories.
- Imagine a pretend meal that will thrill tastebuds or tickle your nose.
- Decorate a box as a car, train, or spaceship.
- Create new lyrics for a song to help make a task fun.
- Build a fort with pillows and sheets draped over a table.
- Sketch nature’s outdoor marvels during a neighborhood walk.
- Develop new dance steps.
- Engage in innovative thought—find a problem and come up with several ways to solve it.
- Build a bridge over a puddle.
- Encourage your kids to use cardboard, sheets, and towels in interesting ways.

All these simple, fun creative moments boost children’s creative thinking and form lasting memories of special times families have spent together.

Visit **Crayola.com** for more ideas and resources.



3. Engaging Families: Why and How

Educators know that collaborating with families is essential to accomplishing our goals. Together, parents and teachers are champions of creativity who co-educate the next generation. When schools welcome the entire learning community, they offer an inclusive culture that celebrates diversity and collaboration.

Parent-Teacher Group leaders help family members feel respected and provide meaningful ways to be teachers' partners. Making sure the environment and school culture are conducive to family engagement is a key way your leadership team and educators express the school's commitment to helping families co-educate so students flourish.



Successful family engagement events are collaborations among school administrators, teachers, and parent volunteers.

Six key tips for planning and implementing your school-family event include:

1. Organize a **planning team**. *(Identify parents who can serve in leadership roles and work on invitations, logistics, activities, and other details.)*
2. Determine **what type of event** would fit your learning community's schedule *(an afterschool student art gallery walk and snack event, weekday potluck dinner, Saturday brunch, or whatever your school's team recommends).*
3. Identify a **date, time, and place**—reserve the location and book the event on the school and district calendars. *(Customize the sample invitations and communication emails and text messages provided in this guide.)*
4. Plan the **event program, activities, and food**. Assign **leaders** and have them recruit **volunteer helpers**. *(Organize committees—each with a role. Preview any videos that will be used. Download and print handouts. Find community or school members who can help with the hands-on activities and presentations at the event. Choose food and supplies that will be purchased or donated. Use the checklist reminders on page 9 of this guide to keep plans on track.)*
5. **Communicate** with the entire learning community using a celebratory tone! *(Prepare and send invitations; identify and communicate messages to greeters, activity station leaders, food organizers, etc.)*
6. Meet the **specific needs** of your community. *(Consider if participants need help with transportation, toddler care, an American Sign Language interpreter, world language interpreters, art gallery guides, etc.)*



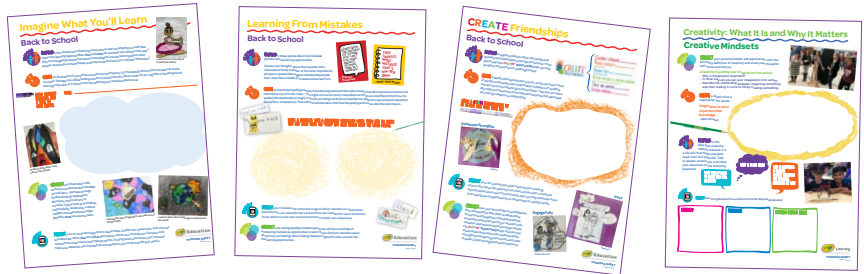
4. Tell, Show, and Listen

Tell families that they are invited to come into school to see what their children have created, to celebrate creativity, and to enjoy fun activities that boost creative self-expression. Convey a welcoming tone and demonstrate the importance of creativity.

Show what will occur during the family event. Your plans may include an art gallery walk, hands-on activities, food, speaker presentations, videos, and more. Children need to be active and have hands-on experiences so they can express themselves during the event. Search for fun *Thinking Sheets* at [Crayola.com/learning](https://www.crayola.com/learning).

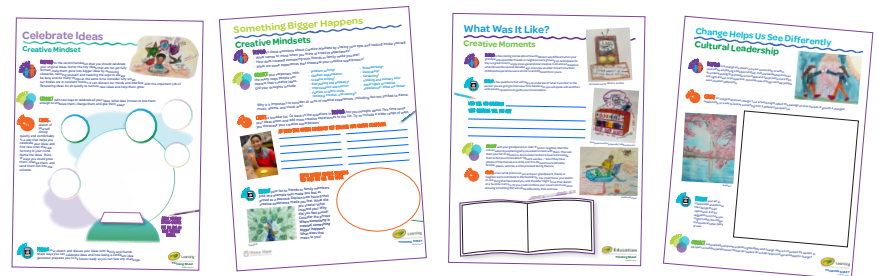
Welcome Back to School

- *Imagine What You'll Learn*
- *Learning From Mistakes*
- *CREATE Friendship*
- *Creativity: What It Is & Why It Matters*



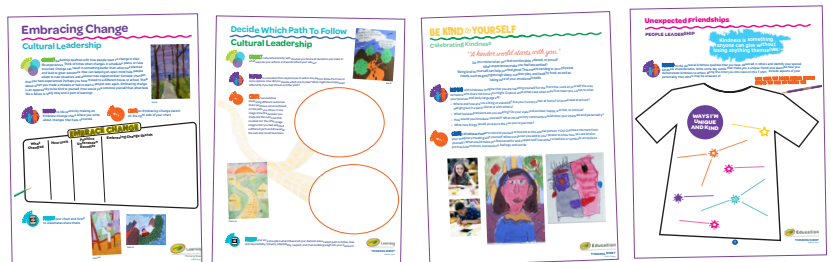
Crayola Creativity Week

- *Celebrate Ideas*
- *Something Bigger Happens*
- *What Was It Like?*
- *Change Helps Us See Differently*



Celebrating a Year of Colorful Learning

- *Embracing Change*
- *Decide Which Path to Follow*
- *Be Kind to Yourself*
- *Unexpected Friendships*



Listen to family members. Ask them questions and demonstrate your eagerness to hear what they think. Ask them:

- *What do you want for your family?*
- *What would increase your creative confidence and help you provide more creative moments for your children?*
- *What do you value and why?*



Participants need to talk, be heard, and do, not just sit. If you have speakers, remember that short presentations that include hands-on activities and questions with time for participants to share their ideas will increase engagement and the success of the event. It is difficult to listen to long lectures—especially when there are young children at the event who need to have fun, move around, and create. Music and food tend to add a celebratory feel to an event—even if it is just a snack or light refreshments.

5. Seasons and Reasons for Family Engagement Events

Welcome Back to School | August-September

Parent-Teacher Group leaders are champions of students' creativity.

In a recent Crayola study, 96% of Parent-Teacher Group leaders said that nurturing children's creativity is a top priority for their organization—whether affiliated with the National PTA or an independent PTO. These leaders, like you, play a critical role in supporting schools. Seven out of 10 say their members volunteer in the classroom, and nearly all (96%) say their organization hosts family engagement events.

A consistent request from these leaders is for practical, ready-to-use activities that can strengthen both classroom support and family engagement experiences. Crayola.com offers free resources that can be used with a single class or scaled for a whole-school event. Many Crayola *Thinking Sheets* and *Lesson Plans* are connected to seasons or themes, making them relevant at key moments throughout the school year.

Welcome Events Set the Tone for the New School Year

The first major opportunity for Parent-Teacher Groups to build connection and provide enrichment is at the start of the school year. Family events in August and September are a joyful way to welcome new families and re-energize those who have long been part of the learning community.

These gatherings often include opportunities to meet students' teachers and get an overview of school and class goals, whether presented to the full group or in smaller settings. Even informal events create valuable opportunities for families to connect with educators, ask questions, and begin the year feeling part of a supportive community.

Creative Styles Help Us Understand Ourselves and Others

New beginnings are opportunities for everyone to learn—parents as well as students. Parent-Teacher Groups can help parents explore their individual creative styles and better understand how creativity influences the ways they parent, collaborate, and navigate daily challenges.

Crayola's free online **Creative Styles** tool provides insights into how people **THINK**, **PERCEIVE**, and **ENGAGE**. The tool takes about five minutes to complete and is easily accessible on phones, tablets, or computers—making it simple to incorporate into a family event or a parent meeting dedicated to this topic.

After selecting the words that best describe you, each individual receives a personalized report highlighting their strengths. The tool does not measure how creative a person is; instead, it reinforces what we know to be true—**everyone is creative**—and reveals how individual styles shape collaboration, decision-making, and idea generation. Sharing this experience can help Parent-Teacher Group members appreciate the diverse strengths within the group and recognize how each person's creativity contributes to a richer learning community.



Use this QR code or search for **Crayola Creative Styles** on any internet browser.



Seasons and Reasons for Family Engagement Events

Crayola Creativity Week | January

Families and educators across the globe use Crayola Creativity Week as a schoolwide celebration of creativity that inspires children to put their imaginations into action. This exciting week-long program, held the last week of January each year, demonstrates that creativity is an essential life skill that helps everyone reach their full potential.



Creativity Week is a perfect time for Parent-Teacher Groups to host a Family Engagement event. Select a time that is best for your learning community—perhaps a weekend brunch, after-school celebration, or family potluck or pizza dinner. In addition to celebrating Creativity Week at a schoolwide family event, there are ways your Parent-Teacher Group can help teachers implement the program during the week and encourage families to use the weekend programs.

Share the registration information with families so they can access the weekend activities at home. They can visit

Crayola.com/CreativityWeek to find all the resources and be eligible to win prizes. The videos can be viewed on any device including a smartphone. Some schools print the weekend *Thinking Sheet* handouts to send home with students. Others remind students that they can use plain paper and any art supplies they have on hand.

Parent volunteers can help implement the program in classrooms or the library during weekdays. The free resources fit busy schedules. The hands-on activities are available in multiple languages and can be downloaded. The activities take less than 30 minutes and weave creativity into other learning areas including literacy, social-emotional, science, math, and more. Parent-

Teacher Groups often donate art supplies to make sure teachers have enough on hand. Students can use the downloadable *Thinking Sheets* or plain paper to explore the *Creative Challenges* that are demonstrated in the daily videos.

Creativity Week is a great opportunity for Parent-Teacher Groups to boost school spirit. Send home the list of creativity spokespersons who students will hear from as well as the seven daily themes. Organize Color Days (*students wear certain colors each day*) or Imagination in Action Days (*send home photos of students' art and comments about what they learned*). Posting photos of students' art on social media using **#CrayolaCreativityWeek** makes your school eligible to win prizes.

Invite your **local community** to support Creativity Week in classrooms, at the schoolwide assembly, and during the family engagement event. Ask grocery stores, restaurants, or food trucks to donate food. The community and school libraries could showcase the books featured during Creativity Week and suggest additional books that support creativity. Your school district's arts supervisors and music, art, dance, and drama teachers could help with this event. And be sure to tap into family members' expertise and interests by having them lead some of the discussions and hands-on activities. Ask local stores and community organizations to help your Parent-Teacher Group by donating supplies. And often when Parent-Teacher Groups ask parents to donate supplies they do, which helps make the event and the classroom implementation of Creativity Week a success.



Donate Classpacks to inspire creativity.

Seasons and Reasons for Family Engagement Events

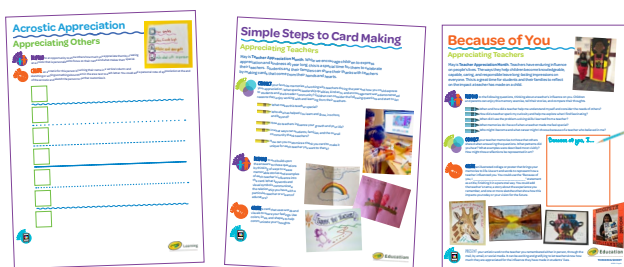
Creatively Show Teachers Appreciation | May

Parent-Teacher Groups can make teacher appreciation especially meaningful by inviting families to combine heartfelt thanks, creative expression, and practical support. While gratitude for educators should be expressed throughout the year, the widely celebrated Teacher Appreciation Week—held annually during the first week of May—offers a powerful opportunity for the entire school community to recognize and celebrate the impact teachers have on children’s learning and growth.

Parent-Teacher Groups can go beyond simply reminding families of the celebration. When leaders share creative, meaningful ways to participate, appreciation becomes a schoolwide experience filled with students’ handmade keepsakes, thoughtful messages, and donations of classroom supplies that directly support learning.

Creative and Practical Ways Families Can Show Appreciation

- **Encourage children to create original thank-you cards at home** and bring them to their teachers. Guide families to help children include one specific example of a special lesson, moment, or interaction with the teacher that made a significant impact.
- **Host a brief after-school creative session led by parent volunteers.** Provide art supplies so students can make colorful handcrafted teacher gifts such as bookmarks, pencil jars, motivational signs, decorated flowerpots, or memory jars—all accompanied by illustrated notes of gratitude.
- **Create a schoolwide “Colorful Thanks” display.** Collect student drawings and messages for educators and showcase them in hallways, on classroom doors, or in high-traffic spaces such as the school entrance or cafeteria.
- **Invite families to assemble “indoor recess” creativity kits for classrooms.** These simple collections of art supplies provide meaningful, creative options for students during inclement weather or when they complete work early.
- **Organize a classroom supply donation effort to help reduce teachers’ out-of-pocket spending.** 90% of teachers spend their own money on classroom supplies such as crayons, markers, colored pencils, glue sticks, construction paper, watercolor sets, and storage bins. Donations directly contribute to classroom learning while showing appreciation for teachers’ tireless support of students.
- **Coordinate with school administrators to host a 30-minute, parent volunteer-led, in-classroom “Draw Your Teacher’s Impact” activity.** This schoolwide experience allows students to create artwork that highlights a favorite lesson, meaningful classroom moment, or something they learned during the year.
- **Decorate a multi-tiered rolling cart as a Teacher “Room Service” Mobile Snack Station** that parent volunteers take to every room with pick-me up treats. Survey teachers for their favorite snacks and coffee orders to be delivered with heartfelt appreciation.
- **Give teachers the gift of time** by coordinating parent volunteers to help with in-class read alouds and student-led projects. Teachers appreciate having some time in their rooms to plan ahead or grade student work, while volunteers assist students.
- **Partner with a local restaurant or grocery store to deliver a catered Teacher Appreciation lunch.** Many local companies are eager to support their community schools. Since teachers’ lunch schedules vary, be sure to keep food hot (or cold) and be mindful of allergies as well as vegetarian preferences and other dietary needs.



- **Incorporate Crayola.com/Learning resources**—such as the *Thinking Sheets* in the *Gratitude and Appreciation* section—to help students express their thanks and make activities easy for parent volunteers to implement.

Seasons and Reasons for Family Engagement Events

Celebrating a Year of Colorful Learning | May-June

Schoolwide events that include families are joyful ways to close the school year.

As the school year progresses, relationships and learning evolve into opportunities to celebrate what students have created together.

Completing a successful school year is an accomplishment worth celebrating across the entire learning community—students, their families, and educators alike. Parent-Teacher Groups often lead these celebrations, partnering with teachers and staff to create meaningful experiences.

Depending on the focus of the event, these collaborations may include:

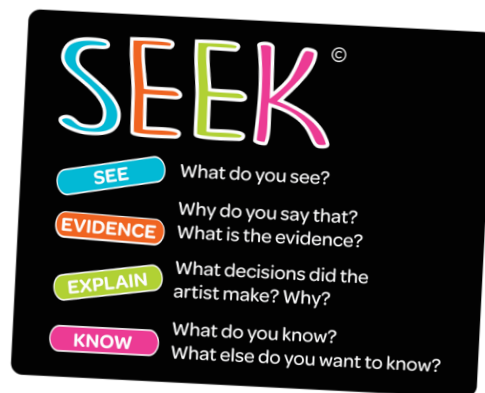
- art teachers and media arts teachers (for art exhibitions)
- music teachers, dance or movement facilitators, and drama coaches (for performances)
- physical education teachers (for sports or “field day” activities).

These events also present valuable opportunities for your Parent-Teacher Group to partner with school leaders and staff—including the principal, food service team, facilities team, librarian, media specialist, and others to create a welcoming, well-coordinated experience for families.

Learning Showcases

A schoolwide art exhibition is one of the most powerful culminating experiences that Parent-Teacher Groups help organize. These showcases document growth across the year and highlight the many ways students express their ideas, perspectives, and feelings through their creative work.

Student docents can guide families through the exhibit, engaging them in meaningful conversations about the artwork. Using **SEEK**®, a simple set of questions designed to help people explore and interpret art, students can deepen family members’ understanding of the visuals while they also build their confidence in facilitating dialogue.



In addition to art room displays, classroom teachers can showcase the colorful learning that occurred during arts-integration lessons. Projects connected to STEAM, literacy, or social studies offer powerful illustrative examples of how creative experiences deepen learning across all subjects—and give students opportunities to explain their thinking to authentic, interested audiences.

Hands-On Creative Experiences

Seeing a year’s worth of student work often inspires families to create together. Your Parent-Teacher Group can organize activities that turn the inspiration into action, encouraging students as well as their siblings and parents to enjoy shared creative moments at the event. The activities can encourage reflection on the year that is ending, spark excitement for the summer months ahead, or build anticipation for the next grade level in the coming school year. Using Crayola *Thinking Sheets* alongside markers, colored pencils, and crayons makes it easy to facilitate the simple creative moments that leave a lasting impression on students and their families.

6. Planning an Event

Planning Checklist

Complete	Timing	What	Who
	Early Planning	Determine Planning Committee leadership and volunteer roles. (<i>Recruit PTA, family engagement liaisons, parent volunteers, teachers, and school administrators who will help with planning, logistics, presentations, decorations, communications, etc.</i>)	Faculty & Parent-Teacher Group Leaders
		Determine type of event (<i>potluck dinner, weekend brunch, afterschool snack & learn with art gallery walk, etc.</i>). Identify date, time, place—reserve location (<i>determine who to invite & estimate # of participants</i>).	School Administrators & Planning Committee
		Develop communications plan . Engage community. Design and distribute invitations.	School Administrators & Planning Committee
	Several Weeks Before	Meet with event leaders and volunteers to review agenda and logistics. Clarify roles (<i>such as welcome greeters, activity leaders, presenters, food organizers, transportation liaisons, art gallery guides, cleanup crew, etc.</i>). Plan committee meetings as needed by tasks. Review plans with support staff (<i>custodians, kitchen crew, security team, etc.</i>).	School Administrators, School Staff, & Planning Committee
		Confirm any rentals and food delivery or pick-up plans. Organize supplies and finalize activity plans.	Team Leaders and Volunteers
	3-5 Days Before	Reconnect with speakers and activity leaders to review plans, presentations, and agenda/timing.	Planning Committee
		If families were asked to RSVP, provide numbers to food prep and room set-up teams.	Planning Committee
		Print copies of handouts/activity sheets and organize any take-home items into bags.	Planning Committee
		Send reminders to participants. Prepare directional signs for attendees to follow as they arrive.	Planning Committee
		What else? List steps that your leaders and volunteers mention as being needed.	Planning Committee
	1 Day Before	Distribute final reminder to participants. Assign greeter(s) to welcome presenters, community guests, and families.	Planning Committee
		Receive/organize perishable foods including drinks, ice, etc. and last-minute supplies. Arrange materials at activity stations. Confirm food serving plans.	Planning Committee and Event Volunteers
		Test all sound, video, and recording equipment. Ask everyone, "What else? What last minute items should be on our 'to do' list?"	School Staff & Planning Committee
	Day of Event	Arrive early to check event area, activity set-up, and food to ensure that everything is ready.	Planning Committee
		Post signs that direct participants to the meeting space.	Event Volunteers
		Greet food crew and activity leaders. Make sure their supplies are set up and they understand their roles. Assign volunteers to help with participant nametags.	Planning Committee
		At end of event, ensure that clean-up volunteers and staff have sufficient help to complete the plan by designated departure time.	Planning Committee & Custodial Staff
	1 Week After	Send thank you notes to volunteers and community members. Debrief with team to assess success and align on any recommendations/changes for next event. Plan the post-event communications that will be shared with families.	School Administrators & Planning Committee

Sample Communications (Invitations, Emails, and Text Messages)

Family Event Invitations

These sample invitations show the way some schools have announced their Family Engagement events. Be inspired by them but customize a sample or create your own entirely different invitation to fit your school's event plans.



Family Event Invitations

Elm Street Elementary Afterschool Snack & Learn about CREATIVITY



DATE: _____



WHAT:

3:00 Art Gallery Walk

Visit classroom & hallway displays of students' art

3:30 - 4:30 Cafeteria

Hands-on activities

Healthy snacks



WELCOME to a Colorful, Fun Family Saturday Brunch

*Nurture students' creativity
during a fun-filled School-Family Event.*



This special program is hosted by Washington Elementary and our Parent-Teacher Group.

Thanks to the Sassy Egg Food Truck and our parent volunteers for donating the brunch.

**Saturday February 1
10 AM to 11:30 AM**

RSVP to school office



Sample E-Mail Messages

e-Mail

Eastmoor Elementary

Subject: Let's Start the New School Year Creatively

Join students and their families for a special **pizza and ice cream dinner on Wednesday, August 29 at 5 PM.** Our entire learning community will engage in fun, colorful activities. Parents can learn about their Creative Styles and students will meet new classmates.

We appreciate Louie's Pizza for their generous dinner donation.

Please RSVP to frontoffice@eastmoorelementary.com by Monday noon so we can tell this generous restaurant how many pizzas to bake.

If you'd like to help scoop ice cream or lead the hands-on art activities, please let the front office or a Parent-Teacher Group leader know. We could use some extra help with this special, colorful event.

See you soon!

Eastmoor Elementary

e-Mail

Three Rivers Middle School

Subject: Join our schoolwide celebration of creativity

Come tour the school's gallery of student art that was inspired by **Crayola Creativity Week.** Enjoy healthy snacks and a special program that celebrates self-expression.

Bring your family and your creative ideas.

We look forward to seeing you this coming Thursday afternoon, January 30 at 3 PM. If we have to postpone because of inclement weather you will receive a text with updated scheduling information.

Colorfully,

Three Rivers Middle School

e-Mail

Forest Valley Elementary School

Subject: Celebrate Ending This Year's Colorful Learning with a Family Potluck Dinner

Please join our Parent Teacher Group's Family Engagement Event: **Celebrate Colorful Learning**

When: Friday, June 3 at 5:00 PM

Where: Forest Valley Elementary cafeteria

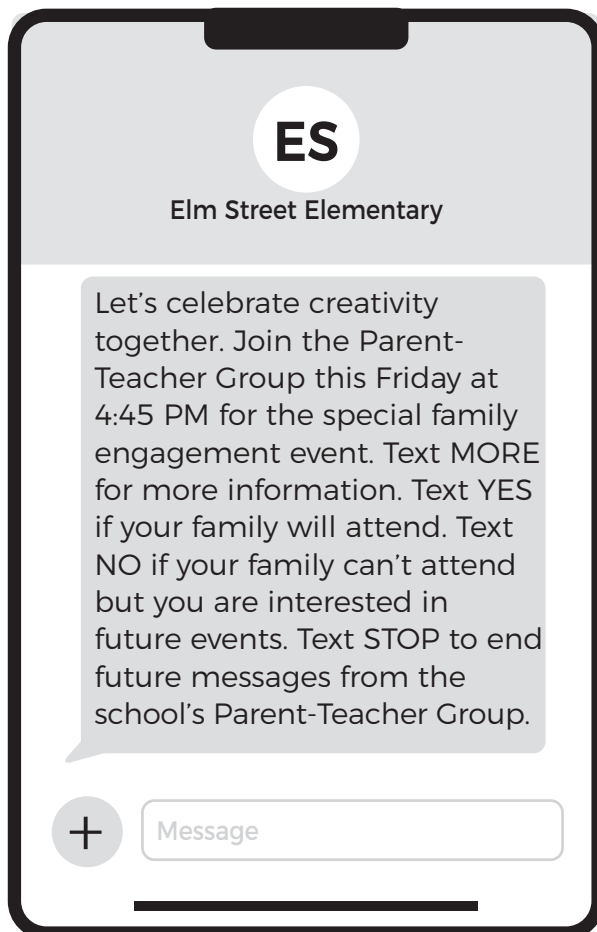
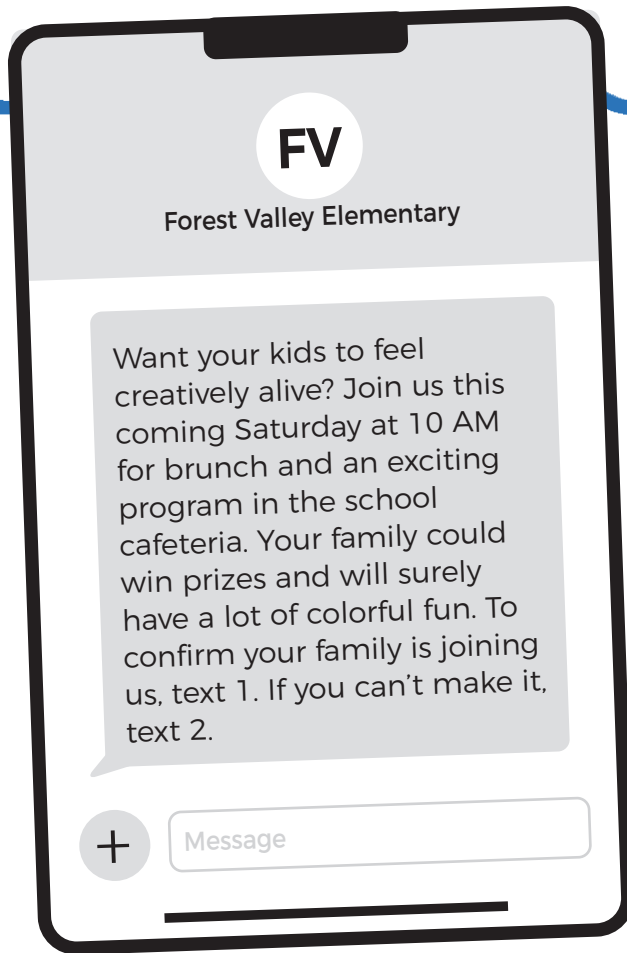
What: Potluck dinner and fun learning activities (art gallery walk, hands-on activities, and more)

Who: Your entire family can participate!

RSVP: Tell us how many adults and kids will join. **Email:** Event@ForestValleyElem.com by May 23

Want to help? Contact the Parent-Teacher Group leader or front office

Sample Text Messages



7. After the Family Engagement Event

Next Steps

Congratulations! Your Parent-Teacher Group just hosted a successful family engagement event and feels a sense of pride and accomplishment. A few simple follow-up activities can help set the stage for future family-school experiences.

Show Appreciation

Words of thanks go a long way. Share your gratitude with the group leaders and the many volunteers, educators, and school staff members who helped with the event. Heartfelt appreciation shared during the event is important. Consider sending thank-you notes or giving them a shout-out in the school newsletter or website. People contribute for the benefit of the learning community—and it is always motivating and rewarding to be recognized for helping to make a program successful.

Pat Yourself on the Back

Regardless of how many extra hands supported you, as the Parent-Teacher Group leader you invested a great amount of time, thought, and energy into this program. Many leaders share that instead of receiving thanks, they sometimes feel like they are the “complaint department.”

It’s important to listen to suggestions—we can always improve. But try not to take concerns personally. Acknowledge your effort and celebrate the impact the experience you created has on the learning community.

Survey Participants

It can be helpful to gather feedback from those who participated and use the information to help you plan future events. A simple survey can ask what families enjoyed, what could be improved, and what types of experiences and themes they would like to see next.

Feedback can be collected using free digital tools or through brief conversations with parents across grade levels. It is also important to gather insights from families who did not attend so you can better understand how to increase participation.

Listen to Parent-Teacher Group Leaders

The team of leaders who organized the event brings valuable perspectives based on their roles and interactions throughout the experience. Be sure to hold a short debriefing session to gather their insights and capture ideas that can strengthen future family engagement programs.

Align with School Leaders

After gathering feedback from your leadership team and families—both those who attended and those who did not—your Parent-Teacher Group is well positioned to begin planning the next event. Share those thoughts with the principal and school leadership team so you can align on priorities, themes, and logistics for future family engagement events.

Thoughtful reflection and follow-up ensure that each event builds stronger connections between the families and the school, enriching the entire learning community.