

50 Really Good Ideas For BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHT



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50 Really Good Ideas For BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHT



Welcome Back To School!

No matter how long you have been teaching, Back-to-School Night can be fraught with anxiety and apprehension. Will parents like you? Will they be supportive? What will the year be like? Teachers know that parent participation and support can dramatically increase students' success, while lack of support can make for a challenging year.

Back-to-School Night is the evening when you need to not only sell your classroom and your curriculum, but you have to sell yourself and your need for families' support. That process begins from the very moment they find out whose class their child will be in and continues throughout the year. Back-to-School Night is one of those critical events that can make or break the amount of parental support you receive during the school year.

The 50 tips and tricks that follow are designed to help you from the very start. From sending invitations to decorating the classroom, to engaging parents during the event and sending them home with relevant materials, the ideas are practical and effective. "Time Saving Tips" are listed below. Some of the ideas include Really Good Stuff® products that can make the activity more effective. Above all, the ideas are designed to make Back-to-School Night less stressful and more fun for you.

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Ideas For Inviting Families

Before you can introduce yourself and your classroom to your students' families, you have to invite them to Back-to-School Night. Unfortunately, with most busy families, invitations can get lost in transit, appointments can easily be forgotten, and even important events can fall off the radar. Consider using more than one method of inviting parents and always send a reminder home to improve the attendance rate.

1 Student Created Invitations

Get students in on the act and have them create their own invitations for Back-to-School Night. Write the date, time, location, and name of the event on the board for students to copy, but let them design an invitation for their family. Be sure to check the accuracy of the information before sending the invitations home.



clude all of the important aspects of the night: date, time, location, and duration, as well as, a brief description of what will happen during the event. If there are any supplies, materials, or signed forms that parents should bring with them, be sure to include that information. Most word

processing computer software programs include templates for brochures so that you need not create one entirely from scratch.

2 Formal Invitations

This idea is especially good for classrooms with a Knight and Princess theme. Print a formal invitation using a flowing script font on parchment paper. Roll the invitations into scrolls and tie them with ribbons in your school's colors. Let students decorate paper towel rolls with foil paper, glitter, and stickers. Slide the scroll invitation inside the tube "envelope" and cap each end with a piece of tinfoil held in place with a ribbon and piece of tape. Send the formal invitations home with students as a "special dispatch" from the "palace classroom".

4 Picture Collage Invitation

Many online photo services offer relatively inexpensive photo cards. Take pictures of your students holding up signs that say "You Are Invited to Back-to-School Night!" and create a photo collage invitation. Another alternative is to have students create the letters of the words using their bodies. On the inside or back of the photo card, include the date, time, location, and duration of the event, as well as, an RSVP request with your school email and phone number listed.

3 Welcome Brochure

Create a brochure that invites families to Back-to-School Night and gives them the schedule for the evening. In-

5 Phone Call Home

Never underestimate the power of a simple phone call — block out 45 minutes to call parents and invite them

personally. While you may not get them on the phone and have to leave a voice message, the personal call helps establish the parent/teacher bond that you need to help students succeed. If you do not want to give out your personal number, create a Google Voice phone number that can be forwarded to your phone. Parents can call the Google Voice number to speak with you and will never have access to your personal number. It is free of charge and even comes with voicemail.

6 Bilingual Invitations

Do not forget to create bilingual invitations for families for whom English is not the primary language spoken at home. If you are unsure as to how to write the invitations in another language, consult with the ESL teacher or school translator to get the proper wording. By making the information accessible to parents in their native language, you not only show them that they are invited, but you make them feel much more comfortable with participating in their child's education. If need be, ask the ESL teacher or translator to come to your classroom during Back-to-School Night to ensure that those parents understand the information that is being presented.

7 "You're Invited" Postcards

Save money on postage by sending out postcard invitations to Back-to-School Night. Using either a generic pre-made postcard or a postcard template that you have created yourself, invite parents to attend the evening's

events. Keep in mind that postcards, while less expensive, can sometimes take longer to arrive at their destination. It is best to follow up with a phone call or email reminder.

8 E-Vite

Depending on the school district where you teach, Internet access in students' homes can be rare or commonplace. If most of your students' families have Internet access, consider sending email invitations or e-vites to Back-to-School Night. An e-vite is quick, free, and allows parents to RSVP instantly. The drawback is that not all of your students' families may have regular access to the Internet, which could result in delayed or non-delivery of

the invitation. If the majority of families have regular access to email, consider sending an e-vite, but following up with another form of invitation, as well.

9 Video Invitation

Have fun with your students while creating a video invitation for families for Back-to-School Night. Students can work together to write a short script, create a background, and even add

music to the video. When the video is completed, add it to your class blog, send out the link in an email to parents, include the link in the weekly newsletter, and add it to a written invitation, as well. Remember, the video will be giving out a lot of information about your class and your students, so it is safer not to put it on a site where anyone can access it. Be sure that if you put it on your classroom blog, it is password protected.



Ideas For Decorating The Classroom

When families walk into your classroom, what do you want them to see? A child-centered, learning-rich environment filled with warm, fun colors, and resources is ideal. Prepare by creating a room that reflects your class' goals, enthusiasm, and attitude toward learning. To make your room more child-friendly, include student-created materials in your décor. If Back-to-School Night occurs before school has started, be sure to have the room set up, as much as possible, for the first day of school.

10 I Sit Here!

Break out the big rolls of paper and have students trace their partner's body for a life-size replica to sit at their desk during Back-to-School Night. After each child has been traced, have students cut out their life-size replica and color it in.

Before leaving school on the day of the big night, have students place their "bodies" on their chairs. You may need to secure each paper child with a piece of tape to keep them from slipping out of their seats.

TIME SAVING TIP: Save time and energy with the **Really Good Stuff® Big Kids Finger Painting Paper** that were designed specifically for Back-to-School Night.

11 Do You Know Me? Bulletin Board

The beginning of the year is the perfect time for students to get to know one another. This activity com-

bines a great first-day-of-school idea with a completed project that will be perfect for Back-to-School Night. Using the **Really Good Stuff® Do You Know Me? (Who Am I?)** cards, students complete the information section on the front and draw or paste a picture of themselves on

the inside. Hang the completed cards on a bulletin board outside of your classroom and have students guess their classmates. On Back-to-School Night, families get to find their child while learning more about his or her classmates.

12 I Get A Kick Out Of Learning

If your classroom theme is all about sports, carry the idea over into Back-to-School Night. Use a soccer

ball template to create a graphic organizer based on favorite school subjects and goals. In the center, students will write their names. Branching out from the center will be their favorite school subjects and things that they are excited to learn about during the school year. Use



Make An Original Open House Display With Ready-To-Paint Kid Shapes

35 Inches Tall!

Big Kids Finger Painting Paper
These heavy, coated-paper shapes are a creative way for students to decorate the classroom for Parent Night. They make a great getting-to-know-you activity, too.
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the completed projects as part of a bulletin board titled "Learning Goals" that depicts the soccer balls going into a soccer net or place them on students' desks for Back-to-School Night.

13 Take A Walk In My Shoes Posters

These ready-to-decorate oversized posters are sure to make a hit with students and parents alike. Featuring a pair of high top sneakers with writing prompts, the **Really Good Stuff® Ready-To-Decorate™ Take A Walk In My Shoes! Posters** is designed for students to fill in information about themselves to share with others. Use the first week of school, or the week leading up to Back-to-School Night to complete the posters. Students will get some great brainstorming and graphic organizer practice and you will have ready-made decorations for your classroom walls or desktops when parents come to visit.

Encourage Students To Tell The Class About Themselves With These Ready-To-Decorate Posters

Ready-To-Decorate™ Take A Walk In My Shoes! Posters

These posters make a great welcome activity at the beginning of the year. Students fill in the information on their favorite things, then color, paint, and decorate their posters to personalize them.

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14 We're Hung Up On Learning

Student-decorated mini tee shirts add personality and interest to classroom decor on Back-to-School Night. If school is already in session, have students decorate a

tee shirt with their name and a design. If Back-to-School Night happens before the first day of school, encourage students to color and design their tee shirt that evening. Hang the completed tees on a laundry line at the front of the room with the sign "We're Hung Up on Learning" in the center.

TIME SAVING TIP: The **Really Good Stuff® Ready-To-Decorate™ About Me Laundry Learning Line** is perfect for this activity and comes complete with everything you need — including the clothespins!

Getting To Know Your Students Is A Breeze With This Unique Hanging Display

Ready-To-Decorate™ About Me Kit

Students will have loads of fun decorating these paper T-shirts to express their personalities and interests. Attach them all to the cord with the colorful clothespins for a unique getting-to-know you display.

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15 It's A Back-To-School Party

Decorate the classroom for a Back-to-School Party. Tie a balloon with the student's name written on it to the back of their chair so that when students and their families

come in for the pre-first day of school meeting, they can quickly find their own desk. Print out a sign, or display a message on your white board that says, “Welcome Back to School!” When students and parents leave after looking around and meeting you, hand them a small “party bag” with a new pencil, an eraser, and a couple of stickers. It is a great way to make sure they know it is going to be a year to celebrate!

16 Set The Mood

Back-to-School Night can be a stressful time for both you and families. While you may have 20 years of teaching under your belt, that first time meeting families is nerve-racking! To ease anxiety, pick out your favorite classical or calming music and have it playing in the background throughout the night. It is a wonderful way to ease the tension in the room. It also creates a calm and relaxing mood in the classroom.

of the classroom. Combine the photos, put it to music, and have it playing on an endless loop, on the Interactive White Board. Students can design their own welcome signs or you can use the same pre-made one. Parents will love seeing their child on the video and you will be able to easily transition into a short explanation of your Interactive Whiteboard’s capabilities during your talk with families.

18 Super Students Learn Here

There is no denying that each of your students is unique in some way. Accentuate their “super powers” by using the **Really Good Stuff® Ready-To-Decorate™ Super Student About Me Posters**. Students can decorate and complete the posters ahead of time and then place them on their desks or on a bulletin board in the hallway outside the classroom for Back-to-School Night. Families then get to find their super student’s poster when they arrive for the evening’s event.

Prepare For A Superlative Year With This Exceptional Welcome Kit

Welcome Super Class Kit
Use the two-sided banner to welcome students to the first day of school or families to Parent Night. Students can personalize the ready-to-decorate posters and student-name diecut pieces!
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Ready-to-Decorate™

17 Say It With Signs

Nothing says, “Welcome” like a simple Welcome sign. In fact, it is the easiest decoration for Back-to-School Night that you can use. However, this year, go a step beyond just hanging it on the board and create a slideshow of your students holding the welcome sign in different areas

need to take with them on their “Learning Adventure”. Place a pencil, a small pad of paper, a “thinking cap”, a pocket-size dictionary, the word “imagination”, etc. in the box and encourage students and parents to look through it to make sure they have everything they need for their journey. This might also be a good time to hand out a list

19 We’re Going On A Learning Adventure

Get your students and their parents excited about the beginning of the school year and all of the things they will be learning during the year. On each student desk, place a plain pencil box filled with supplies that students will

of supplies that students will need to bring with them on the first day of school.

TIME SAVING TIP: Use the **Really Good Stuff® Ready-To-Decorate™ Student Pencil Boxes** as students' "Learning Adventure" boxes.

20 Decorate With Goals

Not only is it important for students to write down their goals for the school year, it is also important for parents to know what their children want to accomplish. Before Back-to-School Night, have students fill in their goals on **Really Good Stuff® Ready-To-Decorate™ Goal Pennants**. Decorate, color, and hang the pennants in the room before the night's events. Instead of having the pennants already hung, you might want to place the pennants on students' desks and have their family hang it on the "Goal Line" to be sure that it has been read. Use heavy-duty paperclips or clothespins to hang the pennants on a cord that stretches the length of the classroom.

21 "It's All About Me Tee" Posters

It is important for students to get to know one another during the first few weeks of school. It is also important for parents to get to know their child and the other children in the classroom. The **Really Good Stuff® Ready-To-Decorate™ All About Me Tee Posters** feature a tee shirt that lets students share information about themselves. Use it during the first week of school and leave them up to decorate the classroom during Back-to-School Night. Ask parents to find their child's poster and also learn more about his classmates. If you are ready to hang new decorations up, let families take the posters home at the end of the evening.

Keep Goals In Mind All Year With Fun-To-Decorate Pennants



Ready-To-Decorate™ Goal Pennants

Students record their personal goals on the back of their pennants, then decorate the front and design a medallion to help keep their goal in mind. Lace them all together and hang for a motivating classroom display!

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22 Centers Explained

Before Back-to-School Night, break students into small groups and have them record a short video on your class iPads explaining the different centers and areas of the room. Each group or pair should be assigned one specific area and come up with a 30–90 second video explaining how that center works or what types of activities are completed there. On Back-to-School Night, have the iPads set out in the different centers and open to the videos. Encourage parents to walk around the room and listen to the children explain how their classroom works. What should you do if you do not have iPads? Record

Introduce Your Students To Each Other With Fun, Ready-To-Decorate Tee Shirt Posters

All About Me Tee Ready-To-Decorate™ Posters
These ready-to-decorate tee shirt posters are a great getting-to-know-you activity at the beginning of the year. Students can color, paint, and decorate their posters to personalize them.

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students talking about the centers on a tape player and have a couple sets of headphones available at each station for parents to listen to the explanations.

23 We All Stick Together

Celebrate your class community and unity by creating a “We All Stick Together” bulletin board for Back-to-School Night. Students decorate large postage stamp cutouts by drawing a picture of themselves and writing their name

on the bottom. The postage stamp value can be their age, the school year, or the grade they are in. When discussing your goals and expectations for the year, use the bulletin board as a jumping off point for a discussion on class community, anti-bullying policies, and mutual respect.

TIME SAVING TIP: The **Really Good Stuff® We All Stick Together! Poster Kit** has everything you need to create a beautiful bulletin board display.

Send A Message Of Classroom Community With This Student-Generated Display

We All Stick Together! Poster Kit
A unique Open House presentation, this kit is a creative way to introduce students to your classroom. Invite each student to design and decorate one of the stamp shapes, then display them all around the postcard poster.

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The image shows a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a green shirt, holding a large, hand-drawn postage stamp cutout of herself. The cutout has a scalloped edge and includes the name 'Tanya' and the value '45¢'. In the background, a bulletin board displays several other similar stamp cutouts, each with a different student's drawing and name. A central postcard poster is pinned to the board, featuring the text 'Mrs. Wheeler's Class', '2020 Teamwork Avenue', 'Monroe, CT 06468', and 'We All Stick Together!'. The poster is labeled with dimensions: 18 inches wide and 12 inches high.

Ideas For Engaging Families

Make Back-to-School Night a fun, interactive event. Engage families in activities that will make them feel part of the class and encourage participation throughout the year. The more enthusiastic they are about your class, the more supportive they will be of their child's education and the needs of the classroom.

24 Who Am I? Game

If your students are not able to write a lot yet, the **Really Good Stuff® Who Am I? Activity Cards** are a perfect alternative. The front cover features four boxes with ample space for students to fill in their favorite toy, things to do, story, and food. The inside features a large space for them to draw a picture of themselves. Stand the tented cards on a tabletop and have parents try to guess which one was created by their child. Once they have found the right card, they are allowed to bring it home.

25 Scavenger Hunt

This idea can be used for both Back-to-School Nights that occur before or after the start of school. Create a set of clues for areas around the room and send parents on a scavenger hunt. A clue might be, "This area is where we read our favorite books." Once parents find their way to the classroom library, they record their answer on the answer sheet and get the next clue. Have a variety of different starting clues so that it does not

become too congested in one area of the classroom. It is a great way to get parents up and walking around the room while they explore the area where their children will be for six or seven hours a day.

26 Class Charity Drive

Introduce families to your yearlong class charity drive. Whether your class will be collecting canned goods for a

local homeless shelter, toiletries for service-men and women, books for a children's hospital, or pennies for a school improvement project, get families invested in the idea from the start. You might even want to use Back-to-School Night as a kick off for the project by asking families to bring an item for the charity. The following day, use the donations received as part of a math lesson by graphing the items that were donated, adding or

subtracting from the goal number, or sorting the items into different categories. Be sure to take pictures to use in your class scrapbook at the end of the school year.



Here's a message from me to you, to share some of the things we do.

I'd like to receive a message, too: this special section's just for you!

Practice Writing Skills With These Ready-To-Use Parent Night Notes

Ready-To-Decorate™ Parent Night Note Swap

Each mat provides plenty of room for students to write a note, as well as space for parents to respond. And just in case a parent can't attend, the open-ended format lets you write a note instead so every student has a message to read the next day.

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27 Dear Mom and Dad...

Parents love seeing notes from their children almost as much as children love getting notes from their parents the morning after Back-to-School Night. Combine writing practice with event preparations for the night by having students write a letter to their attending family member. Ask parents to then write a short return note for their child to receive the next day. Not only will it be a great way to get parents involved while they are in the classroom, it is also a great way to encourage students to practice the writing process.

TIME SAVING TIP: Use the **Really Good Stuff® Ready-To-Decorate™ Parent Night Note Swap** for students' final copies.

28 Learning Suits Me to a Tee

Make Back-to-School Night all about parents supporting their children's learning. On each student desk have a plain white tee shirt and fabric markers. Ask parents to decorate the tee shirt for their child with words and phrases that encourage them to learn. You might want to create a sample tee shirt so that parents can get some ideas about what to include. Phrases such as, "I am a great reader!" "Math Super Hero", and "I'm smart!" are

good starting points for parents to see. Write each student's name on the tee shirt tag with a permanent marker. Create a few extra tee shirts for those students whose parents were unable to attend. Pass out the tee shirts to students the next day and let them wear them over their clothes for a day of positive learning.

29 Find My Desk

Make it a game to find students' desks. Before Back-to-School Night, have students create a map to their desk from the door of the classroom. They can lead parents through different areas of the room for a roundabout route or draw a direct path. It is a great way to introduce maps, scale, and directions. Be sure to be standing at the door when parents begin to arrive, so that you can hand them the map to their child's desk.

30 Photo Shoot

If Back-to-School Night happens before the first day of school, take some time to take pictures of each student. Throughout the year you will be able to use the photo in craft projects, graphing lessons, and other assignments. At the end of the year, take another photo and create a scrapbook for each child of the year's events. Looking for a creative backdrop? Create a simple Step and Repeat

A Classroom Garden In One Easy, Neat Kit

Wonder Soil Classroom Gardening Kit

Pop the Wonder Soil wafers into the coir pots, add water, and stir. When the wafers expand to just the right amount of soil, add the included seeds—it couldn't be easier. There's no mess and no guesswork.

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banner by covering a section of your white board with paper that has been printed with a special design, such as “Mrs. Brown’s Classroom” or “Welcome to Third Grade”.

31 Sign the Learning Pledge

Taking learning seriously is important for both students and parents. Create a class learning pledge that both families and students can sign. If Back-to-School Night is scheduled after the first day of school, have parents add their signatures to the class pledge that you create with your students on the first day of school. If it is scheduled for before classes begin, use a poster size version of the school or district’s behavior and learning expectations for children and parents to sign that night. Display the poster prominently throughout the year as a reminder.

32 Parent-Created Writing Prompts

Journal writing prompts can grow old after using them a few times each year. Let parents help come up with some new and exciting prompts by asking them to write one on a sentence strip. Collect the strips and store them in a sentence strip box that is designated exclusively for daily journal prompts. Spread them out during the year for a fun surprise. Make sure parents write their names and their child’s name on the back so that you can point out who wrote the prompt.

33 Plant a Flower

Traditionally, students plant a flower or grow a bean plant at some point in the school year to take home and share with their family. Mix the idea up a bit for Back-to-School Night and have parents plant a flower for their child. The child is then responsible for caring for the plant, making sure that it gets enough sunlight and moisture. As the plants grow, students can record information about them in their science journals. A fun twist might be to have students read to the plants and record their growth rate to see if talking to plants really does help them grow. Be sure to plant a few extra plants for students whose parents cannot make it to the event or for those whose plants do not sprout.

TIME SAVING TIP: Use the **Really Good Stuff® Wonder Soil Classroom Gardening Kit** that comes complete with pots, soil wafers, and seeds.

34 Guest Reader Sign Ups

Today’s busy schedules make it difficult for some parents to participate in class and school events. While they may very much want to be a part of their child’s classroom, work and other commitments during school hours can make it challenging. On Back-to-School Night have a sign-up sheet for guest readers that is spread out throughout the year. Make parents aware that if they cannot actually be in the classroom to read the story, they can record themselves reading the book. Then, on the day they have been scheduled to read, you can easily play their video for all to see. Another option is to use Skype to make a video call to the parent if he is out of town or unable to leave work that day.

35 Polling Parents

Graphing data is a lot more fun when it is information about parents. On Back-to-School Night, ask families to

take a short poll that students can use the next day in a graphing exercise. A simple survey asking for their favorite food, ice cream flavor, season, sport, etc. from a choice of four or five options will make for excellent data for the following day's math lesson.

36 Many Hands Make Light Work

Before Back-to-School Night, have students trace one of their hands. Collect them and on one side, write a supply list that you need donated for class projects or upkeep (i.e. baby wipes, cardboard tubes, old magazines, etc.). Hang the hands on the board at the front of the room and ask parents to select one that they would like to donate. Be mindful of the cost of items and your students' family's financial situations by requesting donations for many free and low-cost items.

37 What Do You Suggest?

Most parents want to feel connected to their child's classroom and be able to suggest ideas and activities. On Back-to-School Night, share with families your suggestion box and encourage them to participate. If they cannot come into the classroom to physically put their suggestion in the box, let them know about alternate ways that they can get their ideas to you (i.e. send it in their child's

Boomerang Folder, send an email with the subject line being "Suggestion Box", etc.).

38 Take-Out Helper Bags

When you do not have time to eat in a restaurant, what do you do? You order take-out, of course. For parents who may not have time to help out in the classroom, create an equally easy solution for helping them to help you. Create "Take-Out" Bags that contain a specific job or task that will help save you time in the classroom. Some bag suggestions include:

- a "Book Hospital" bag filled with a roll of clear packing tape and a couple classroom library books that are in need of repair;
- center materials that need to be cut out, colored in, etc.;
- book order forms that need to be separated and collated;
- bulletin board shapes that need to be cut out;
- and more!

Ask parents to sign up to receive a bag once a month or once every other month during Back-to-School Night. Send a note home the week before the bag will be sent home to remind parents. Be sure to include a "Please Return to School By (date)" slip in each bag so that parents

know when to have it completed and returned. If possible, include a weekend in the time frame that they have to complete their bag.

TIME SAVING TIP: Use durable, reusable bags for the projects. The **Really Good Stuff® Store More® Large Book Pouches** are ideal, as they come in a variety of fun colors and will keep the projects protected on their journey to and from school.

Color-Coordinate Groups And Activities With Single-Color Pouches

Store More® Large Book Pouches

Made entirely of water-repellent, nylon fabric with a colorful contrasting trim, these stylish pouches are perfect for storing or sending home books, homework, and notices. Each one has a 1" sewn-in gusset, a hook-and-loop closure, a strong woven carrying strap, and a vinyl name tag pocket.

Item #159217 **BL GR RE YE BLN GRN ORN PIN**



39 Meet Our Mascot

Class mascots are a fun way to create a sense of community in the classroom. On Back-to-School Night, introduce the class mascot to families and have them sign up for a “Weekend with the Mascot” during the school year. On their selected weekend, students are sent home with the class mascot and the mascot’s journal. Over the weekend, students and parents write a short paragraph for each day telling about what the mascot did. For example, if the mascot went to soccer practice with the family, that might be included in Saturday’s journal entry. When the mascot and the journal arrive back at school on Monday, have the student read the journal entries and share the weekend’s events. By having parents sign up on Back-to-School Night, it gets them invested in the activity right away and keeps students looking forward to their weekend with the mascot.

40 The Bragging Corner

During Back-to-School night, reiterate to parents that there is nothing you enjoy more than celebrating their child’s success. Point out a small area off to the side or behind your desk where you have hung up a small bulletin board with the phrase “The Bragging Corner”. Explain to parents that when their child has had an exceptionally good day that you would like permission to call them, with their child, during the school day to share the good news. In order to do that, however, you must have their permission to call and the best phone numbers to reach them. Ask parents to fill out an index card with their names and the best phone numbers to reach them at

during the day. If there is a day or time during the week when they absolutely cannot receive phone calls, have them indicate that too. Store the index cards in a file box and place it under the bulletin board in the Bragging Corner.

41 The Way to the Heart Is Through the Stomach

The main purpose of Back-to-School Night is not to eat, but having a small table or desk set aside with some simple refreshments is a great way to create a welcoming, homey atmosphere. A simple fruit or vegetable tray, cookies, or crackers and cheese can be accompanied by lemonade or iced tea. Parents will appreciate the snacks, as some may be coming directly from work to attend the event.

42 Clear Expectations

Parents appreciate finding out what the expectations are for their child during Back-to-School Night, but they also appreciate knowing what to expect during the evening. Pass out, or have on the board, a clear schedule of the night’s events. You might even want to put the night’s schedule in your schedule pocket chart to demonstrate how students will be required to look at the chart throughout the day. Have a clear start time a few minutes after the doors open, a clear ending time, and a time when parents can linger to explore and ask questions informally. Be punctual and stay on schedule to show that you respect their time as much as you want them to respect yours.

Ideas For Parent Take-Aways

When parents are ready to leave your classroom after Back-to-School Night, you want to make sure that they take some key pieces of information home with them. The ideas below will help ensure that they leave with everything they need to know.

★ 43 Parents Are An Important Part of the Puzzle

As the school year wears on, it is easy for parents to forget the importance of their role in the classroom. On Back-to-School Night, give them a reminder that will stick with them all year long. Before the night of the event, pass out blank puzzle pieces to each student. Have them decorate the piece with a picture of themselves and the words "Parents Are An Important Part of the Puzzle". On the back of each puzzle piece, stick a small magnet. On Back-to-School Night, put the puzzle together and hang it on your magnetic whiteboard. When talking with parents about the important role they play in their child's success, take the puzzle pieces down, one by one, and hand them to parents. It is a great visual reminder of how their role impacts their child's success and the classroom as a whole. Encourage them to put the magnet on the refrig-

erator or their desk at work as a reminder of how much their participation is needed.

TIME SAVING TIP: Use the **We All Fit In Puzzle Kit** for student-decorated puzzle pieces.

★ 44 Contact Me Cards

Just like those in other professions have business cards, so too should teachers. A small business card with your contact information at the school, as well as, your class blog address and the best times to reach you by phone should be included. There are many online business card companies that allow you to design and order business cards for a nominal fee. If you would rather print out your own, most word processing software has a function that will allow you to create a simple card using a table or a pre-made business card format. Be sure to have enough

to last all year long, as you may want to include them in students' Boomerang Folders every semester.

★ 45 Ways to Connect

It is important for parents to know how and when they can contact you should they have a question or concern. Create a magnet with all of the pertinent information that they need and include it in their take-home folder from Back-to-School Night. Encourage them to hang it on the refrigerator

Build Classroom Community With This Puzzle-Building Kit

We All Fit In Puzzle Kit
This fun activity is a great way to represent the unity of your classroom community. Students decorate individual puzzle pieces to reflect their personality, and then assemble the puzzle for a truly unique display.

Item #157451

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24"

for easy access. While you can order pre-printed magnets online, you can also apply a simple round magnet from the craft store to the back of your contact card.

★ 46 Sample Classroom Newsletter

If you do a weekly or monthly classroom newsletter, be sure to show it to families during Back-to-School Night. Ask them to be on the lookout for it at the beginning of the month, every Friday, or whenever you send it home. Not only is it important to tell them to expect its arrival, but also it is also important for them to see what it will look like so they know what to expect. If you post your newsletter on your classroom blog, be sure to demonstrate on your Interactive Whiteboard how they can find it online. Keep in mind that some families do not have Internet access and having a completely paperless communication system with parents may not be ideal.

★ 47 I Wish For...

In the take-homes and discussion points for Back-to-School Night, include a wish list of supplies and classroom materials. Also be sure to let families know when to bring them in. For example, if you have “5 Boxes of Tissues for the Fall” on your list, let the parent who signed up for that item know the specific date that they need to bring them in to the classroom. Since some items may not be needed until later in the year, you might want to ask parents to store them until you send a note home indicating that they should be sent in. Empty toilet paper tubes are a good example of a “gather, but leave at home until needed” type of supply. By making parents immediately aware of what is needed in the classroom and when, you will have a better chance of having a supportive and enthusiastic parent base.

★ 48 Read Together

Getting parents to buy in to reading aloud to their child can be difficult if their schedules are busy. However, as research has proven, being read to is one of the key ways to increase students’ love of reading, vocabulary, comprehension, and understanding of fluency. Make sure to stress this during Back-to-School Night and give parents a list of recommended read-aloud books that they can get started with. Choose books with rich vocabulary, interesting plots, and subjects that your students will enjoy. If you have a class blog, be sure to also put the list online for easy access throughout the school year.

★ 49 Explore The Internet

Rainy weekends are a great time for students to work on those wonderful educational websites you have found. Parents would, for the most part, love to direct their child to them, but many do not know where to find them. On Back-to-School Night, hand out a list of your favorite, kid-friendly, educational websites. Include a brief description of each one, so that parents know what skill they are asking their child to work on. Again, if you have a class blog, be sure to include the information on there.

★ 50 New Student Packets

Depending on where you teach, you may have a lot of students coming and going from your classroom all year long. While you are making up packets of information for families on Back-to-School Night, make a few more (or a dozen more depending on your student turnover rate) to keep on hand when new students arrive. Families will appreciate having all of the information they need to know right away as they transition to their new home and school.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHT CHECKLIST



3 Weeks Before

- ☐ Create and send out invitations
- ☐ Start decorating the classroom with child-created work

2 Weeks Before

- ☐ Start working on your presentation
- ☐ Draft the night's schedule
- ☐ Create a snack menu
- ☐ Gather supplies for any planned activities
- ☐ Continue decorating the classroom

1 Week Before

- ☐ Finalize your presentation and begin practicing it aloud
- ☐ Finish any presentation materials (slideshows, audio, etc.)
- ☐ Finish gathering materials for the night's activities
- ☐ Put together file folders of materials for parents to take home

Days Before

- ☐ Send a reminder email or make a reminder phone call to families
- ☐ Continue practicing your presentation
- ☐ Gather snacks, plates, cups, and napkins
- ☐ Finish decorating the classroom with student work
- ☐ Decide what to wear

Day Of Back-to-School Night

- ☐ Eat a healthy breakfast, lunch, and dinner
- ☐ Practice presentation one last time
- ☐ Set up the classroom
- ☐ Set out supplies for projects
- ☐ Put out snacks
- ☐ Smile!