



PARENTNET®

Sample Mid-Year Newsletter

Topics Include:

- Dispelling Myths about ParentNet

(Feel free to copy and use any portion of this article, changing the names, dates, etc. to reflect the needs of your particular school.)

Dispelling the Myths about ParentNet

During the time ParentNet has been in existence at _____, we have become aware of misconceptions, or myths about the program through parent surveys and conversations. Sometimes, it can be just as important to communicate what a program is NOT, as well as to underscore what it is.

Myth #1: ParentNet is a place to go only when I have "issues" with my child.

Some parents do attend ParentNet meetings hoping to get advice on specific challenges with their child. However, ParentNet meetings are designed to build community with other parents in your child's grade, different from chatting at a social or sports event. It is an opportunity to learn about others perceptions of the social, academic, and personal challenges facing our same-grade children and how we can better support them in their journey toward independence. By sharing our parenting successes, we give one another new ideas, information, and knowledge to help us be better parents. So, whether everything is going great with your child or whether you have specific questions to ask other parents, this is the perfect time to attend a ParentNet meeting! The more parents who attend, the more valuable are the discussions.

Myth #2: Students view ParentNet as an occasion for parents to "talk behind their backs."

It may be true that some students, particularly those in the older grades, view ParentNet as a vehicle where parents learn things they don't want them to know. They believe it is a gossip session that leads to more rules being set at home. While some students fear the idea of parents sharing ideas and experiences with other parents, our surveys tell us this is not the case with most students. Oftentimes, parents come home with an understanding of issues that the student perceives as a benefit. The best way parents can help dispel the myth that ParentNet is threatening to their child is to talk with him/her about the goals of the program and help them see its benefits for you as a parent. The "Parent Contract" is particularly helpful in pointing out that ParentNet is not a place for gossip but rather an opportunity to share new ideas, perceptions, and knowledge that improve our parenting skills and awareness.

Myth #3: ParentNet is not a safe place to share experiences or information because sometimes people don't keep it confidential.

Since its inception at _____ three years ago, over sixty ParentNet meetings have taken place, involving hundreds of _____ parents. Consistent with groups who are striving to build trust and community between members, parents are asked not to share details of personal conversations outside of ParentNet meetings. This is no different than the courtesy and respect we show to family and friends on a daily basis. Including the "code of confidentiality," there are six specific guidelines contained in the "Parent Contract," each designed to encourage effective communication and respect for all opinions. We are aware of some concern about confidentiality. Although they have been extremely rare, when breaches of confidentiality occur, they naturally result in people feeling less safe for a period of time until trust can be rebuilt. If our goal is to build a parent-school community where open communication helps support the growth, development, and safety of our children, then each of us must be compelled to model the guidelines and spirit that underlie ParentNet. When we occasionally fail to keep a confidence or misspeak in other ways, we try to learn from our mistakes and take steps forward to achieve our goal. Isn't this exactly one of the life skills we wish for our children? If you have felt unsafe sharing personal experiences in a ParentNet meeting or have heard rumors of a rare breach of confidentiality, we encourage you to attend another meeting. You play an important role in making ParentNet a meaningful part of our community. Ultimately, it is parents, not the program itself, who define the spirit of ParentNet at _____.

To learn more about ParentNet or read summaries of grade-level meetings, please go to the _____ website at _____.