



# Back to School Night/Open House

*Adapted from "Building Culturally Responsive Family-School Relationships" by Ellen S. Amatea*

This spin on the traditional "Back to School Night" involves more collaboration as parents and students are given opportunities for more active involvement and two-way communication.

## Things to do Ahead of Time:

- ✓ Send out personal invitations to families for the event. You may have teachers make time in their classes for students to make invitations for their families.
- ✓ Make sure students are invited to come as well!
- ✓ Write down a few questions for parents and students to answer during the event about what their goals are for the school year.
- ✓ Type the questions and print copies for each family to fill out during the event – include space on this sheet for families to write down some things they can do to achieve these goals.

**Recommended Time:** Weeknight evening; for about an hour to two hours

**Recommended Location:** School classroom

## Materials:

- ✓ Printed copies of goal questions for each family
- ✓ Pens or pencils for each family
- ✓ White board/chalk board/flip chart
- ✓ Sign-in sheet
- ✓ Nametags
- ✓ Refreshments

## Set-up:

- ✓ Set up desks into circles or small clusters for more collaboration and discussion.
- ✓ As families come in, provide each person with a name tag.
- ✓ When the program starts, have the classroom teacher take time to introduce him or herself and then go around the room and have each student and family member introduce themselves to the room.
- ✓ Hand out goal sheets and allow time for families to work on their goals together.
- ✓ Go around the room again and have each family share some of what they discussed, if they feel comfortable; have the teacher make note of key words or ideas by writing them on the board or flip chart.
- ✓ Allow time for the teacher to address the goals that were shared and to share any other information he or she would like parents to know for the year.
- ✓ Make sure to leave time at the end for families to mingle with each other, and for parents to speak individually with the teacher if they wish.

## Reference:

Council of Ontario Directors of Education. (n.d). *Planning for parent engagement: A guidebook for parents and schools*. Oakville, ON: Author. Retrieved from:  
[www.ontariodirectors.ca/Parent\\_Engagement/PA%20Downloads/34919\\_CODE\\_Guidebook-ENG.pdf](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/Parent_Engagement/PA%20Downloads/34919_CODE_Guidebook-ENG.pdf)