

101 Program Ideas

Courtesy of Eighth District PTA

1. Performance by School band, choir or orchestra—most are happy for the chance to shine!
2. Classes or grade act out a story from a literature assignment, or create a play from social studies theme.
3. Teachers compete in lip synching rap or other popular songs.
4. Many banks give programs about teens handling credit and checking accounts or about qualifying for home loans.
5. High school counselors or representative from area colleges can talk about financial aid and planning ahead for college with classes and resume building activities.
6. A local veterinarian talks about caring for pets.
7. The school nurse talks about health and hygiene, problems she sees often at school, or general nutrition—be sure to provide healthy refreshments for this one.
8. Police are often available to talk about gang awareness, drug abuse prevention and even home and identity theft security tips.
9. Ask a nursery to give a talk or demonstration about houseplants or home gardens. Be sure to have a sign-up sheet for school beautification day.
10. Slime Science—teachers are often good resources for something like this, or the local high school science club.
11. Family Math—lots of things you do around the house show usefulness and teach the concepts of math. For example, measuring for baking teaches fractions. Teachers may have some great ideas for the hands on displays.
12. Science fair—lots of school districts have these, and PTA can provide an event to showcase the entries, and maybe even offer a mini-fair for lower grades.
13. Storytellers, even a foreign language, are compelling. Spotlight your school's various cultures with folktales, traditional songs, games and food.
14. Hold a Hoe Down! Get the school band to play American favorites, have fun food and play old fashioned games. Have a square dance with the teachers.
15. Book Swap—have corners for popular series like Goosebumps or Babysitter Club.
16. Fun with a twist—hold a sock hop with sandwiches and floats.
17. Saturday morning fun runs—good way to promote exercise and family time, and a nominal entry fee covers costs for water along the way.
18. Jog-a-thons—a classic fund-raiser, but you can also hold one for parents. Tip: Provide fun activities and snacks for the kids in the center of the track while their parents are running.

19. Miniature golf course with weighted cans—classes design the holes.
20. Spell-a-thons by grade with this year's spelling list.
21. Bowling Green—Set up pins or $\frac{3}{4}$ empty liter soda bottles on the grass.
22. Disability Awareness- rent wheelchairs from a medical supply store and have a self-propelled race; play basketball holding foam boards between your knees; try to cut a curly form with your less –agile hand, read a story upside down and be quizzed by the teacher.
23. Saturday Soccer—parents and kids of all ages hit the field (tip: Jocks taking over? Make scores by younger kids count double). Remember to have plenty of water handy.
24. Spaghetti Dinner with kids singing operas they made themselves.
25. Tamale night with parents and student musicians jam sessions.
26. Fall camp out on a Friday Night on the school playground. Folks pitch tents, eat food they brought Have sing-a-longs, pick-up soccer games and nature crafts. In the morning cook a pancake breakfast for everyone (which makes it a mini-fundraiser, too.)
27. Pre-open house beautification day with plants donated in teacher's honor.
28. Garden tidy time where parents or grandparents supervise kids weeding and working in classroom gardens during lunch break or recess.
29. "The Grands" Club for grandparent mentors and tutors.
30. Nursing home pen pals with monthly themes for the letters—what was school like when you were a kid?, what chores did you do at home when you were my age?
31. Dad and Doughnuts or Muffins and Moms- parent and grandparents come and eat breakfast with their child before school. PTA provides coffee and doughnuts for adults (bring extra for sharing).
32. Family field trips to a zoo or hands on science museum—meet there or at the school and take a chartered bus or school bus if there are enough people.
33. Miss and Master Manners—Hold a high tea with moms decorating tables to give etiquette instructions tailored to the grade having tea at the time.
34. Creating blankets for holiday baskets could be a regular morning knitting or quilting time for parents. Collecting cans and packing up holiday baskets for the needy could be an evening program.
35. Clothes closet—Keep as supply of warm clothes, appropriate school wear, underwear and shoes that the school administrators can hand out at their discretion. Since it is maintained for the school at large, it is not considered a gift to individuals. If you have used clothing, see if a local dry cleaner will donate coat cleaning.
36. Encourage pro bono dental services and schedule appointments-- this is a huge need for poor families.
37. Helping in computer lab—If your school does not have a computer tech, this is a huge need. Even if they do, if you are well-versed on the internet, you may be able to help by

setting up class folders of sites kids can visit to research on changing topics. Even if there is a computer tech, with 32 children in a group, there is always a need to answer questions and keep an eye on computer use.

38. Friends of our Library—re-shelve books and think of events to promote and support the school library.
39. Art docents teach pre-set, grade appropriate lessons on art styles, one person devoted to every class in every grade, throughout the year.
40. Spend an evening giving recorder lessons on camp songs.
41. Post an art show each week from a different classroom in the cafeteria.
42. School board information nights: Have a different school board member come to each association meeting and give a short talk, take a few questions.
43. Policy panel discussions--
For example, many schools have problems with parking at pick-up time. A discussion might include a member of the police department talking about laws, and street parking regulations, staff members who supervise afterschool and the principal, with a focus on inviting solutions from parents.
44. Information on upcoming changes, for example a new dress code or school boundary moves. Many times school district officials will welcome this opportunity.
45. Students debate school policies or proposed policies—taking both sides.
46. Graffiti and gang signs information for parents—make sure interpreters are up on the lingo they'll need.
47. Safe routes to school presentation with discussion of school parking and drop-off, pick-up issues.
48. Time for tutoring—this could be an after school program with high school or older students helping younger grade students as well as parents.
49. Recess programs like a soccer camp or skills camp.
50. Rainy-day recess programs.
51. Good Eats program with Nutrition News, Lunchbox All-Stars and BAM!!-Breakfast ideas for a fast tasty start.
52. Security with Courtesy, especially with middle and high schools: talk about how parents can be involved at school; arrange fingerprinting if necessary.
53. Step-Parenting: Forming bonds, avoiding “favorites” trap and “truce-time” with the ex.
54. Single-Parenting: Helping children weather divorce, maintaining stability for kids and developing a support network.
55. Working-Parent: Scheduling, including alternatives when sick, keeping connected with school and each other, sharing chores to make family time count.
56. Babysitting basics: Red Cross provides first aid instruction, safety issues, what to charge, what to wear, parent expectations.

57. Cool School for Parents: Teen run (PG rated) program, teach current lingo, top songs, demonstrate top dance steps, strut a fashion show.
58. Walk a Ways: Parents walk the school hallways instead of going to the gym—involves pre-registering for a safety badge that is checked in and out from the office whenever on campus. Provides added security for the school environment and fitness for parents.
59. Classroom volunteer training for parents.
60. Working with volunteers training for teachers.
61. Perils of Pauline—how to work with difficult people training tailored for teachers and parent conferences using humor and role-playing.
62. The copy and Paste Squad: Volunteers come each Monday to help with duplicating and other work teachers need done.
63. Safety City: from National Highway Traffic Safety Administration—
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/outreach/KidsPage/bussafety/
64. Picnic under the stars—if you can get the high school astronomy club to join in, set up telescopes, otherwise, tell native American legends of how earth, stars began, Greek legends behind constellations.
65. Bike Rodeo—team with local police and a bike shop for freebies.
66. Teachers Garage Sale in June—chance to sell or swap educational materials as teachers change grades, enter field or retire.
67. Homework that Works at Home: Tips for parents, teachers about communicating, scheduling—teachers give favorite books, tips for their grade and crib sheets for math.
68. Meet the Candidates Night—short presentations with Q and A or a candidates' debate. You MUST INVITE EVERY CANDIDATE and treat them equally (PTA can not endorse or appear to endorse anyone) Often the local chapter of the League of Women Voters will moderate a debate of this type, which brings in their expertise.
69. Peace at Home: Way to help children resolve conflicts without hitting.
70. Back Busters: Information on back-saving techniques and discussion on backpack weight—best type of packs to buy, how to distribute weight, find ways to minimize hauling books to school and back.
71. 10 Ways to Fight Hate: http://www.tolerance.org/10_ways/index.html from the Southern Poverty Law Center.
72. Reindeer Shuttle: A new twist on the December sock hop.
73. Earth Week: Lunch programs for saving energy, endangered species, environmental concerns, enjoying national parks—Weigh trash bags after every lunch period Thursday with treat for lunch period with least trash on Friday.
74. Teddy Bear Check-up: Team with ambulance and hospital providers to teach younger kids about health screenings or hospital stays—Donated or personal teddies get an x-ray, blood pressure check, stethoscope listen.

75. Literacy Night: Include book faire, room with book swap (tables for popular series like Goosebumps or Babysitter club); live storyteller (can be in different languages, they're still wonderful to watch), Pocket Poetry—keep a poem in your pocket and if you can recite it from memory when randomly asked, you get a prize.
76. Earthquake and disaster preparedness—Have fire drill; find where to stand in your home, outside; keep water, up to date first aid and food.
77. Family craft night
78. Medieval (K)night: Sell early day food (with modern tastes in mind); have period costumes (tip: peasant wear is easier to do) have games of the day; Castle back drops.
79. Toast 'n' jam Saturday breakfast with musical instruments (tambourines, triangles—probably not drums) open to young innovators of all abilities. Time for parents to converse while the kids play.
80. Finger painting and other messiness—get recipes for play dough, finger paints etc. and share them (and the fun) with young families.
81. Basketball Shoot Out—Put trash bins below to stop runaway balls and to give younger kids a basket they can hit.
82. Camp-Song Sing-a -Long with kids' recorder accompaniment-team with a classroom and provide recorders.
83. Teachers' monthly potluck with a little saucer in front of each dish. Every luncher gets one marble to place before their favorite dish—winner just gets bragging rights.
84. Snuggle up with a Good Book night—volunteers wear pajamas and serve hot cocoa and cookies. Old blankets are spread on the floor (encourage folks to bring their own books and blankets to just read together). A storyteller or two sit in rocking chair corners.
85. Provide toddler day care one morning a week so moms can help out in the classroom. Remember childcare has to be done by at least two unrelated adults—if this program is popular, you'll need more.
86. Science experiment un a box—make lots of these sort by grade level, then let parents check them out from a parent resource center if you have one, or even check-out table that is set up outside on Friday afternoons and check-in table Monday mornings.
87. Computer savvy “lessons” one day a month for parents right before school lets out and teachers just after on skills or topics they pick.
88. Language exchange—parents who want to learn each other's language are partnered up (with other language) to solve a mystery. Have lots of basic language guides, upbeat background music (keeps it from seeming so eerily silent to start.)
89. Parent education series: Parenting help for parents of teens; Critical viewing of TV and computer use by kids; recognize stress and depression in kids and adults.
90. A homework online hotline for parents—some teachers will e-mail in their assignments or put them on a website each afternoon.

91. Family movie night with popcorn and hotdogs.
92. Shake, rattle and roll presentation on what is an earthquake and how to prepare, react.
93. Paint a “Carmen San Diego” style world on your playground and give teachers laminated maps with names they can have their students play with during breaks.
94. Struggling with Juggling—make tons of same size bean bags and teach whole families to juggle. (Hint: have something with a beat to play in the background)
95. Convention Chronicles—have all those who are sent to the California State PTA or National PTA convention try as best they can to recreate everything they learned and share all the great ideas they learned from other schools.
96. War Stories: Honor Veterans as you present the school with a new flag (maybe one that flew above the Capitol, write your elected lawmakers). Some Vets may not wish to speak to a crowd, so you might have a history teacher tell about the wars they were in.
97. Stories from around the world: Have lots of tables where people from different countries talk about growing up in another place—what they ate, what they played, what school was like. Show pictures of their country and have native foods at their table. Give each child a “passport” to have stamped at each country and a pencil to write something about each one. When they’re all stamped, they get a World Traveler certificate.
98. Pioneer Day—Have kids spend a morning being settlers; pan for gold, eat jerky and biscuits listening to tales of Paul Bunyan, square dance, knead bread, quilt a square and build cabins with Lincoln log sets of blocks.
99. PTA coffee klatches—invite a different administrator or school board member to each one and give parents a chance to get to know the local decision makers.
100. Give tickets redeemable for small rewards for Random Acts of Kindness spotted on the playground—let kids also give them out by telling an adult something someone else did.
101. Parent Bingo before school lets out on Friday. Charge 25cents a card and winners get some small donated prize like a \$2 gift certificate for ice cream or a bag of cookies. Add up your “take” before folks go and announce how much has been raised-use for educational classroom rainy day games, whenever it’s spent announce what it brought to the Bingo group!