

**NJSBA Annual Workshop
Guiding Tomorrow's Leaders**

**Citizen's Academy 101:
A New Way to Engage Your Community**

Presenters:

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Zander Consulting, LLC



Agenda

- What is a Citizen's Academy?
- How we came to do this
- Goals and benefits
- Curriculum
- Resources
- Lessons learned
- Feedback



How we came to do this...

- Develop an Effective Communications program
- Provide an in-depth education about the school district for the general public
 - How it works
 - State Mandates & Laws
 - Budget Considerations
 - Curriculum & Assessments
 - Special Programs
 - District Initiatives



How we came to do this...

- Invited volunteers from previous community survey
- Ambassadors for our school district
- Decided on a 6-week program
- Each session was approximately 2 – 3 hours in the evening
- Celebrated with a graduation ceremony at BOE Meeting



Goals & Benefits

- Establish/gained a relationship and credibility from the community
- Attendees were able to meet the various administrators and staff
- Alumni invited “back-to-school”
- Educate all aspects of the school, (special education, bilingual programs)
- Presents the needs of the school first hand
- Laid the ground work for the future





Curriculum & Development

- All administrators put forth a team effort
- Tours of schools were offered at the end of the first three sessions
- Used different presentation formats to keep presentations “fresh”
- Interactive activities engaged learners
- Guest speakers invited to certain sessions



The Citizen's Academy Curriculum

- #1 School's in Session
 - Snapshot of district
 - General facts
 - Demographics
 - Decision-making activity
- #2 The Buck Stops Here!
 - New school funding formula
 - Developing the annual budget
 - Education Foundation
 - Budget quiz & assignment



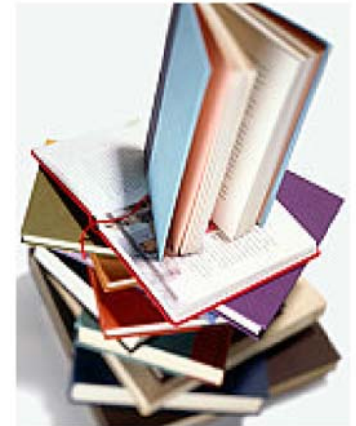
The Citizen's Academy Curriculum

- #3 “Teacher, I know the answer!”
and Special Programs
 - Curriculum development
 - Special education
 - ESL/Bilingual education
 - Data-driven decision making



The Citizen's Academy Curriculum

- #4 The Whole Child, not just Half
 - Guidance, CST, and support services
 - Beyond school hour programs
- #5 Testing & NCLB
 - Student achievement: What do the tests mean?
 - Professional development
- #6 Governance
 - BOE roles, responsibilities, policies



What it took... resources

- Materials
- Refreshments
- Personnel hours
- Logistics
- “Putting it all out there”
- Strong belief in community involvement and shared vision



Lessons Learned

- Certain sessions ran late – timing issues
- Most members asked for a later start time
- More diverse group needed, open up to the community
- Include Rotary, Council of Churches, and cultural groups
- There is no “perfect” time of the year to hold sessions
- Stress on administration and support staff
 - Time intensive



...and the survey says

- “...gained much insight by having principals show “their” schools.”
- ...”it is always a good thing to get to see where and how and in what environment our children are learning.”
- “I was not aware how regimented and restricted things are from the state funding level.”
- “Well presented and informative.”



...and the survey says

- “a unique opportunity to spend time with the school officials.”
- “I think it should almost be mandatory for parents of enrolled student or at registration.”
- “Eye Opening”
- “Covered areas I had no idea about”
 - Special education
 - Curriculum development
- “The entire Citizen’s Academy was great!”
- “Thank you!”



General Comments

- The responses to the Citizen's Academy were very positive.
- Participants felt they had a more complete understanding of the district and its functions.
- The group agreed that all topics presented were necessary and did not recommend eliminating any sessions.



Q&A



Thank you

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