

A Better Parent Night

Bruce Kelsh, principal of the Upper Primary section of Hong Kong International School, did his homework after last year's parent Parent Night. By checking in with the participants, he learned that the parents wanted more time with teachers in the classrooms.

A lot of time is lost moving from classroom to classroom around our eight-story building. Also, teacher visits begin only after our entire community gathers in the gym for an administrators' welcome and an overview of the coming school year. While everyone acknowledged the need to hear from Bruce and other school leaders, we wondered if the program be tightened up to allow more time for meetings with classroom and specialist teachers.

Technology to the rescue! Using the school's television production equipment, our administrators taped their remarks ahead of the evening. (As one of our 4th graders introduced each speaker, we also showcased our school's focus on developing oral presentation skills.) The format for the evening was then altered as follows:

As parents arrived, administrators greeted and welcomed them at the gate. An informal community gathering followed at the porch entrance area of the school where parents and teachers chatted and enjoyed some social time. Parents then went straight to classrooms. Parents and teachers then "tuned in" to the closed circuit TV network to hear the taped remarks of school leaders before moving on to classroom teachers' presentations.

Sometimes technology is criticized for creating barriers to community building and face-to-face contact. In this case technology solved a logistical problem and maximized time for our parents to meet teachers as well as one another in the classroom, building a stronger school community.

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