Parent Education Lesson Plans

Lesson One

Background and introduction

There is a parent-lead project in Minnesota called Birthdays Without Pressure. Their mission is to raise awareness of the problem of out-of-control birthday parties and to offer alternatives. Let’s piggyback on their work today.

Group discussion

(working in groups of three and designate a person to report back to the whole group)

Do you struggle with this issue yourself with your own children’s birthday parties?

[If yes] How is it a struggle for you? What have you tried—what’s working, not working?

(continue to list ideas on a board viewable to all present)

(whole group watch video…the running time for Martha Stewart’s “The Perfect Gold Birthday Party”: 5:23)

(set-up the video) Ask parents to consider the following:

- How is the experience for the children?
- How many hours of parent labor is involved in this project?
- If each trophy is $3.50 each, do you think the total materials will equal or exceed $40?

For next week

Why do you think birthday parties have gotten so out of control? What do you think we can do about this as parents?

To do at home (provide slips of paper with the questions...report back next week)

Please interview your child with the following questions:

- What was your favorite birthday party?
- What was fun about it?
- What was not fun?
Lesson Two

Follow-up on at-home conversation with children:

List on the board favorite birthday parties and what was fun and not fun.

Do you see any themes in what the children said?

The next video clip will help us focus in greater detail on why birthdays have gotten so out of control. [Julia Louise-Dreyfus sitcom - running time 12 minutes] Julia’s character proclaims: “I am putting an end to this craziness.” Does she succeed and how did things get this crazy in the first place?

Now, let’s conclude today by beginning the process of generating a list of birthday alternatives. [list on the board]

Closure

Invite parents to visit http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/ for additional information including a list of birthday alternatives.

In the weeks and months ahead, please report back to your group as you develop new thinking about birthdays.