



Inviting parents to a relaxed, informal gathering is a great way to bring families and school staff together that allows for parents to check in about specific things happening at school and mingle with one another while enjoying coffee and baked goods. At University Hill Elementary School in Boulder, Cafecitos have become a key way of connecting to and engaging with families.

Events such as Cafecitos are appropriate for any grade level. A Community or Family Liaison can plan the event with the help of a parent volunteer coordinator, the PTA/PTO, and other community partners. Staff at University Hill Elementary note that having the principal's participation makes a huge difference. There are three steps in implementing Cafecitos: 1) Determine location, date, and time; 2) Clear the date and confirm with individuals attending the gathering, i.e. principal, community partners, liaisons, or others; and 3) Gather and pack or order from a local coffee shop coffee/tea and baked goods. Approximately three hours of work goes into each Cafecitos: .5 hours of planning, such as scheduling and deciding on a location, date, and time, as well as sending emails to community partners; 1 hour of printing and emailing flyers to parents and posting flyers around the school; .5 hours of prepping coffee and going out to purchase baked goods; and 1 hour for the actual event to occur.

By scheduling a Cafecito event the second or third week of the month and announcing the gathering in a monthly newsletter or by adding it to the school calendar of events, parents learn about the gathering in time to not forget and to ensure successful attendance. A simple attendance sheet can be used to evaluate the success of the gathering. Cafecitos are relatively inexpensive to host. Coffee and baked goods may cost around \$25. Plates and cups may be provided by the local coffee shop, purchased at a grocery store for \$5-10, or regular mugs and plates on site can be used. Staff should consider inviting an interpreter if there are no school staff at the gathering that speak the specific language of a family. This would increase the cost of the event.

University Hill Elementary Staff recommend offering Cafecitos at different times each month so that parents who can't make it early in the morning may be able to the following month. Additionally, hosting Cafecitos at different locations throughout the community may make them more accessible to parents with transportation barriers. Finally, while you want parents to have an opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns, and experiences, it is helpful to have a general discussion topics such as what to expect at parent-teacher conferences, summer school, or transitioning to the next grade level.

Cafecitos is a great way of connecting with parents and creating a welcoming school community.