

PARENTS' EVENING

ON MEDIA CHARACTERS AND CHILDREN

Plan your own parents' evening step by step

1

Start planning

In the first step, you can start with the organisational preparations for the parents' evening. Where do you want to hold it? Are you already in contact with an institution, e.g. a school, or do you want to organise the evening independently and detached? Book a room and make arrangements with people on site. Go back to the basic module *Planning a Media Educational Parents' Evening* to use the support materials shown there. Use our *planning sheet* to prepare systematically and not forget anything.

We'll cooperate with the class teacher of a pre-school and together we'll organise a media educational parents' evening for 5-year-old children on the topic of media characters. We will use the school's premises and jointly invite the parents of the school class.

2

Find your topic

Decide - perhaps in consultation with parents or teachers with whom you are holding the parents' evening in cooperation - if you'll talk about media habits generally or if you will set a specific focus. Use the steps shown in the chapter *Conducting a Media Educational Parents' Evening*.

We decide to talk in general about the topic of media characters and their importance, influence and possibilities of their use in media education for 2-6 year olds.

1. Think about the overall aim of your parents' evening.
Think about who you are addressing with your presentation and what the central theme is.
Formulate the guiding principle for your topic. Our example:

To inform a group of parents about media characters and their role in the life of children of the age group 2-6.

2. Derive the key points of your parents' evening from this objective.
Keep your target group in mind: What information is needed to understand the topic?
What information is needed to fulfil the overall purpose? Our example:

Main Point 1	Explain in general the importance of media characters for this age group.
	Explain the role of media characters as children's companions.
	Describe how children identify with media characters.
Main Point 2	Explain how media characters influence young children.
	Explain how media characters shape children's perception of gender.
	Describe the connection between media role models and real role models in children's lives.
Main Point 3	Explain why it is important to help children understand the difference between reality and fantasy.
	Explain the benefits of co-viewing.
	Describe the potentially harmful parental attitudes.

3. Choose two to three sub-issues to focus on in your parents' evening.

Main Point 1	Describe how children identify with media characters.
Main Point 2	Describe the connection between media role models and real role models in children's lives.
Main Point 3	Explain the benefits of co-viewing.

3

Inform parents about your parents' evening

Once you have found your topic for the parents' evening, booked a venue and set a date, it is time to inform parents about your parents' evening. We have created a *template for an invitation* in our document section.

4

Finish your presentation

1. Organise your topics in a meaningful way and prepare them visually.
You are welcome to use the *presentation template* we have prepared as a basis for this.

We have structured our presentation thematically - from general usage behaviour to perception and the resulting advice for parents.

2. Put special focus on the introduction and the conclusion
Involve parents from the beginning. Use the introduction to generate attention for your topic and prepare parents for the content of the parents' evening. Make sure that all the content you promise in the introduction is also covered in your parents' evening. Use the conclusion for a concise summary and state your central concern or a call to action for the parents.

In the beginning, we ask parents about their children's favourite media characters. We let them name a few characters and ask them about why they think their children prefer them. It will set the mood for the rest of the parents' evening and prepare the parents for the content we've prepared for them regarding the different roles media characters play in their children's lives and how to best use them for media education.

3. Give the parents a handout that, for example, summarises the most important content, contains recommendations for action and includes your contact details for queries. You can find an example in the documents.

Our aim is for parents to leave the parents' evening informed and with clear advice and tips. They should feel more confident in dealing with media and be able to better accompany and train their children in everyday life.

A handout can help to summarise the most important contents and give concrete recommendations for action. In our handout there is also an exercise that parents can implement with their children: Parents are asked to watch their favourite series with their children. The children are encouraged to tell what the series is about, what they like about the series and the characters, and which scenes they find disturbing.

5

Involve parents

In order to positively influence the atmosphere and cooperation at the parents' evening, it is advisable to start with an activity that loosens up the atmosphere. This is called an icebreaker. Icebreakers can be used to help the group get to know each other better, but also to explore the interest and expectations of the topic. The key to success is to make sure that the activity is specifically focused on meeting your objectives and appropriate to the group of people involved.

In our introduction we'll elicit the answers to learn about the most popular media characters of children and their qualities to learn something about the participating families and break the „ice“.

Even before the actual presentation starts, you can involve parents. We'll use flipcharts to do that. When entering the room parents are invited to answer questions on our flipcharts before finding a seat.

- What do I expect from the parents' evening?
- What do I (not) want to hear or experience here?
- What ideas do I have about the topic: How do media characters influence young children? Why are media characters important for children? How can we help children process overwhelming media experiences? Etc.

Through this we can see whether the wishes for the evening correspond to our planned presentation or if adaptation is needed. During the evening we can refer back to the results again and again and really focus on the individual needs of the parents in front of us.

Engage parents in conversation during your parents' evening. Involve them actively in the evening through exercises and support them in questioning their own role and their child's media use. To do this, use the exercises and tips we have compiled for Media Parent Consultants under each course.

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Ask for feedback

Be sure to ask parents for feedback on your parents' evening. This can be done by sticking dots on a flipchart or by sending an online survey by email afterwards. The statements will help you to prepare your next parents' evening in a more target group-oriented way.