

PROJECT GRADUATION



A How-To Manual

Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation
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INTRODUCTION

When Spring rolls around, only one thing is on the minds of high school seniors across the country: GRADUATION! As a rite of passage, graduation night is unequalled in the eyes of youth. It is a night to be proud, to celebrate past achievements, and to look forward to the future. But some teens mistakenly think that the best way to celebrate on graduation night is to drink alcohol. In the past, graduation parties involving alcohol have left some graduating seniors with hangovers, embarrassing memories, and in trouble with their parents, friends, and/or the police. Some others were not so lucky. There were 15 teenagers killed in alcohol related crashes in Maine's 1997 graduation season.

Graduation parties should be fun, not fatal. The idea of all night, chemical free graduation parties is not new. Oregon high schools have sponsored such parties for graduating seniors for 50 years.

The name "Project Graduation" was coined twenty years ago by planners in Maine, where a total of eighteen people had died during two graduation seasons due to alcohol-related crashes. Maine's first Project Graduation was such a success that high schools throughout the State adopted similar programs, and "Project Graduation" became a generic name for the chemical-free graduation parties that have started a new tradition - celebrating safely.

All school-related functions are supposed to be chemical-free, but what makes Project Graduation different is the attitude of the students. They have made a conscious decision to enjoy their graduation night without alcohol or drugs. And no other group, including parents and school personnel, can make that decision for students.

It should be noted that the graduation party suggestions in the pages that follow can be used to plan chemical-free activities throughout the year. While celebrating safely has been referred to as "Project Graduation," you'll find that this approach is equally effective for planning homecomings, proms, Halloween carnivals, victory dances, and other celebrations.

INVITATION

GETTING STARTED

When should the first planning meeting be, and who should be invited?

Many communities begin planning and fundraising for their seniors' Project Graduation when those students are freshmen. If you must wait until they are seniors, try to hold the first planning meeting as early in the school year as possible. November or December is not too soon, although senior classes with smaller enrollments may start planning a little later.

The small group of student planners who originate the idea for Project Graduation should decide among themselves who should be invited to the first planning meeting. Some veteran planners have said that it is best to include at least one or two members from key groups - students, parents, teachers, and even business persons.

What decisions need to be made at the first informal planning meeting?

A list of discussion items should be made before the meeting so that time may be spent constructively. Some of the areas you may choose to address could be the types of committees that will be needed; whether the committees will be made up of students only, or of a combination of students, parents, and teachers; approximately how much money will need to be raised through donations, fundraisers, and ticket sales; and how enthusiasm may be spread to other students, parents, school employees, and to the community-at-large.

Which group will take the lead in planning the party?

Is Project Graduation for seniors by seniors? For seniors by parents, with help from school personnel? For seniors by school personnel, with help from parents and the business community?

For the purposes of this booklet, it will be assumed that your Project

Graduation is being organized by seniors, with assistance from parents, school personnel, local business persons, and members of the media. But it should be noted that there have also been some very successful Project Graduations where parents or school administrators took the lead.

Who is the chairperson (or chairpersons) whose job will be to oversee the planning process?

It is very important to have one, or even two, students who will take responsibility for coordinating the work of the various committees and overseeing the entire project. It is a big job, and it's not for a shy or overly-sensitive student. Past Project Graduation chairpersons have reported that the job is as rewarding as it is big, and knowing that they may have played a role in saving the lives of their friends is more than enough payment for the headaches that come with being "the boss."

WHAT WILL WE DO?

Before considering possible settings, themes, and activities for Project Graduation, it's a good idea to know when Project Graduation will officially begin and end so you will know how many hours you will need to fill. Past planners have suggested that it is best to schedule as few hours as possible between the end of graduation ceremonies and the party's beginning. And they have also emphasized the importance of the event lasting all night.

Upon first learning about Project Graduation many people have asked "Why should it last all night?" Graduation night is a time of high energy and buoyant spirits. If Project Graduation parties end while the seniors are still "ready to party," a few might be tempted to continue the celebration in ways that are not safe, in spite of their pledges to remain chemical-free.

In addition to being chemical-free and lasting all night, the most successful Project Graduation celebrations provide intense natural stimulation on a variety of levels that makes the artificial stimulation of alcohol and drugs pale by comparison. The fun associated with this "natural high" is a strong selling point when promoting Project Graduation. For instance, Project Graduation might start out with *physical activities* (a dance or athletic contest), then move to *sensory activities* (a special dinner or a walk on the

beach), or *emotional activities* (class will, or seniors taking turns telling what they will miss most about high school). The possible activities for Project Graduation are endless, and it won't be hard to develop a winning combination for your high school. Just remember when planning the night's schedule that the name of the game is "sensory variety."

Each community has its own assets when it comes to choosing activities, and preferences seem to have some regional differences. So look at the special benefits that your area has to offer, and get lots of input from senior class members. Some settings, themes, and activities that have been successful at other Project Graduations across the country are listed here to help you get started with your own plans.

POSSIBLE SETTINGS

- School Facilities
- City Parks
- Recreation Centers
- YMCA/YWCA
- Elk/Moose/Masonic Lodges
- Country Clubs
- Racquet Clubs
- Campgrounds
- College Campuses
- Sports Arenas
- Airport Hangars
- Natural Areas (e.g., river, lake, spring, park, mountain)
- Facilities to Rent (e.g., amusement park, train, bowling alley, movie theater)
- Local Attractions (e.g., river boat, "haunted house," convention center, ranch)



THEMES

Not all Project Graduations have themes. It is strictly a matter of preference. Some schools hold theme contests. Students are encouraged to submit theme suggestions, and a group of student judges select the best

entries. Next, a ballot listing the top five choices is distributed for seniors to vote for their favorite.

Some of the more popular themes from Project Graduations around the country include:

Hawaiian Luau	Toga Party
The Class Slogan	Olympics
Casino Night	Movies
Rodeo	Titanic
Theme music	Men in Black
nights, 50's, 60's	Mardi Gras
Disco	Medieval
Masquerade Ball	

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Activities

Many planners for Project Graduation have found it helpful to distribute a "Senior Survey," a selection list of possible activities to get input from the entire class. Seniors vote for the activities that appeal to them most. Senior Surveys are explored more fully in the Entertainment Committee section, and a sample Senior Survey appears at the end of this booklet. Popular activities have included these:



<u>Music:</u>	Live bands, DJ's, music videos
<u>Dances:</u>	Dances and dance contests
<u>Entertainers:</u>	Comedians, magicians, hypnotists, caricaturists, etc.
<u>Class Histories:</u>	Slide shows, skits, and class wills
<u>Food:</u>	Progressive dinners, cookouts, buffets, snacks, breakfasts (perhaps pool-side at sunrise)
<u>Games:</u>	Arcades, casinos, video games, pool, miniature golf, school trivia, scavenger hunts, team relays, bingo, eating contests, Jell-O wrestling, mashed potato fights, paint-ball, watching videos.
<u>Athletics:</u>	Tennis, racquetball, volleyball, bowling, roller skating, ping pong, swimming, weight lifting, aerobic dancing, donkey

basketball

The Unusual: Tethered hot air balloon rides; creating a giant sundae or submarine sandwich; graffiti wall of butcher paper on which to record feelings; boat rides; talent shows; camp-outs.

Students' Selling Points. One big party will be much more fun and will offer a wider variety of activities than smaller private parties.

This will probably be the last time that the entire class will be together. It will be a night to remember . . . and chemical-free seniors will be able to remember it.

Seniors will select the activities, food, and entertainment to assure that the party will be great fun for their class. Seniors will be leaving a legacy of safe celebrations for undergraduates - a legacy that will probably save the lives of future graduates.

Teachers' Selling Points. All seniors will have a party to attend on graduation night. Some students will discover or rediscover what a great time they can have without alcohol or drugs. A tradition of substance-free parties will be established or reaffirmed in the school district.

An activity like Project Graduation can enhance the school's community relations.

Parents' Selling Points. No one will have to risk injury or death due to drug-related crashes. None of the seniors will have to deal with peer pressure to drink or ride with a drinking driver on their special night.

Cost will be minimal to students and parents. Parents can relax on graduation night knowing seniors are safe and having fun.

GENERATING INTEREST

No doubt about it - putting together a big, well-organized party requires a great deal of time and effort from many people. Past planners have reported

that it's essential to gain the support of the other students, parents, school personnel, police, and the community to make Project Graduation the best party possible. Regardless of who has taken the lead in organizing Project Graduation - students, parents, teachers, or other school personnel - many people are going to have to be "sold" on the idea.

Generating Interest From Other Students

A good place to introduce the concept of Project Graduation to the rest of the seniors is at a class-wide meeting during school hours. And, while it is important that the students understand the rules prohibiting alcohol or other drug consumption before and during the party, the main emphasis should be on how spectacular the graduation celebration will be. Project Graduation may sound even more attractive to your classmates if it is described by the senior class officers, who, hopefully, will have been active in the planning process from the very beginning.

It's important to let the other seniors know that letters will be sent to all parents explaining the party's rules and asking for their help so that students will feel that the organizers are being "up front" in all aspects of the planning process. The students need to understand that, while Project Graduation is a party for and by seniors, it can be bigger and better with help from parents and other adults. Also, adult volunteers will be crucial on the night of the party to act as food servers, chaperones, etc., so that student planners may be free to enjoy the festivities with the rest of the class.

As plans for Project Graduation progress and specific details become known, keep the other seniors informed - either with written notices or public address announcements at school. It is crucial that all the students feel like Project Graduation is *their* party.

Generating Interest from School Personnel

Involvement of school personnel is critical to the success of your Project Graduation. It is wise to involve the principal early in the planning process and ask him/her about best ways to obtain school faculty and staff support. Ask for time on the faculty meeting agenda to present information on the reasons for, the benefits of, and the current status of Project Graduation. Ask for their help. Perhaps some would be willing to be advisors or members

of the committees needed, or serve as chaperones at the event. They may also help by promoting the party through articles in the school newspaper, announcements over the school's public address system, posters, ticket sales, and letter-writing.

Generating Interest from Parents

Parent support is also necessary for the success of Project Graduation. Since some parents may plan family parties on graduation day or night, the more notice they have of the need to schedule carefully, the better.

Experience has shown that the easiest way to contact parents is by direct mail. The initial letter to parents should be co-signed by the Project Graduation Chair(s) and the school Principal. It should outline some of the reasons and rules for Project Graduation, and should stress the positive aspects of the party. It might include three forms for parents to return to the school - (a) a consent form that will allow the student to participate, (b) a volunteer form which identifies the general area in which the parent would like to help, and (c) a donation form indicating what the contribution will be for those who wish to donate. Samples are found at the back of this booklet.

Generating Interest from the Community

In addition to the other students, school personnel, and parents, you will need the support and cooperation of many subgroups in the community, including local merchants, civic groups, law enforcement officials, and the media. If possible, give each subgroup a poster to display that will identify the organization as "A Supporter of Project Graduation."

Local Merchants-for Donations of Money, Services, and Prizes

The fundraising/finance committee, prize committee, and food committee should work together through the Project Graduation chairperson to make sure they don't contact the same merchants for donations. In the initial approach to merchants, give them a brief sketch of the party reasons, rules, and benefits. Put emphasis on the community service they would provide by contributing to the success of the event. Some Project Graduation organizers have sent letters to merchants prior to contacting them in person or over the telephone. The advantage of sending advance letters is that

fundraisers will not have to repeat the information or take as much time at each place. The drawbacks, of course, are that processing letters takes time and involves the cost of paper, envelopes, and postage.

Civic Groups - for Donations of Food, Prizes, Money, or Labor

The leaders of these groups may be approached in a similar manner to the merchants. It is possible that an organization like the Masons, Elks, or Women's League, might choose Project Graduation as their club's special charity project, and give both financial and volunteer support. Local churches and synagogues might also be willing to help with financial assistance, volunteers, or by loaning equipment or special facilities.

Law Enforcement Officials - for endorsement and any help that might be needed in policing the area surrounding the site(s) of the party

Also, the public support of the police and other officials could go a long way in selling the idea to parents, school administrators, and other members of the community.

Media - for generating positive print and broadcast stories on Project Graduation

The publicity will help convince the public that the party will be fun, safe, and a worthwhile community project. More information on contacting the media may be found in the Publicity Committee section.

ORGANIZING THE COMMITTEES

Committee volunteers are like a team that must play harmoniously to make Project Graduation a success. In addition to students, committees may include parents, school personnel, merchants, media representatives and any others who are interested in assuring that graduation night is both exciting and safe.

Organizing the committees is a big job. Each committee member must see himself as a member of a team, and not in competition with members of

other committees. This is especially important when committees are contacting local businesses for donations of goods, services, or money in order that each be contacted by the best person for the job, once, in the most effective way.

The Project Graduation Chairperson must stay in regular contact with the committee leaders, and should attend the more important meetings of the committees. He or she should hold occasional meetings of the committee leaders to enhance communication and allow committee leaders to take an overview of the entire effort back to their committees.

Another important function of the Chairperson is to arrange for insurance coverage. It may be possible for Project Graduation to be covered under the policies of the Booster Club, PTA, or school. If coverage is to be arranged through a club, it may be necessary for all committee members to join the club to be eligible.

It is helpful for the Project Graduation Chairperson to keep a journal or other records of activities during the planning of the event to pass on to the chairperson for the upcoming year. A calendar noting the dates of major activities and meetings proves helpful. The chairperson should ask the leaders of the committees to keep similar journals to pass on.

Finance/Fundraising Committee

The duties of the finance/fundraising committee are to solicit funds and services for Project Graduation, keep exact records of donations and expenses, and organize any fundraising projects.

When soliciting funds, you might find it helpful to send letters to larger local businesses and civic groups and follow-up with personal visits or phone calls. For smaller businesses and private homes, teams of two committee members could solicit door-to-door. Volunteers who have done this in the past recommend taking copies of a flyer that describe Project Graduation, and including a phone number and address, to leave with those who want time to consider their contribution.

Regardless of how the fundraising/ finance committee chooses to contact contributors, it is crucial that the Project Graduation chairperson know

which groups have been contacted so that the same people are not approached by other committees.

One person needs to be in charge of keeping exact records of donations and expenses. The committee leader of the finance/fundraising committee may serve in this capacity or appoint another member to be treasurer. The Project Graduation treasurer will be responsible for opening a bank account for the party, writing checks, and keeping a detailed record of available funds and expenditures.

There is an endless number of fundraising activities that may be organized by the finance/fundraising committee. A list of fundraising activities may be found starting on page 31.

Tips for Finance/Fundraising Committees

Consider incorporating your Project Graduation as a nonprofit organization so that donations from local businesses will be tax deductible.

Visit your local Chamber of Commerce and ask them to contact their membership for donations.

Contact local fast food chains for donations of money and/or food and drinks.

Decorate coffee cans or shoe boxes with the high school's colors and emblems and place them in nearby stores and restaurants for collections.

Ask parents to solicit donations from civic organizations to which they belong.

Have seniors and their parents collect newspapers, bottles, and aluminum cans to raise money.

Donate leftover funds as "seed" money for next year's Project Graduation, for a scholarship, or to purchase a gift for the school from the senior class.

Entertainment Committee

The entertainment committee is responsible for gathering senior input on

themes and activities, selecting and securing facilities, making arrangements for entertainers and events, and working with the other committees.

Gathering Senior Input

After a decision has been made about the desirability of a theme, the entertainment committee should conduct a Senior Survey, if possible, to assure that the night's activities are attractive to the senior class (review the sections on Themes and Activities and see the "Sample Senior Survey" in the back section). If you opt to have a theme, design the Senior Survey so that the activity choices reflect the mood of the theme.

Selecting and Securing Facilities

There are many factors to consider when selecting and securing facilities. First, if activities throughout the night are to take place at various locations, you will not want members of the senior class to provide their own transportation. Ask your community to donate free use of buses for the evening, or ask the school to donate the use of school buses. Remember that the drivers will need to be paid, unless they are willing to donate their services to Project Graduation.

Other considerations, when selecting facilities are safety, convenience, and price. The members of the entertainment committee should ask themselves these questions:

- What are the fire regulations concerning the selected locations?
- Are there possible hazards that should be addressed?
- Do the facilities have the storage refrigeration, or cooking units that will be needed by the food committee?
- Do the facilities have public address systems, or at least the proper electrical outlets for microphones and speaker?
- Could the use of the facilities be donated by the owners, or paid for by a civic group or business?

🎵 *Making Arrangements for Entertainers and Events* 🎵

If a live band is hired for Project Graduation, the entertainment committee should make sure that there is a written contract specifying that drugs and alcohol will not be used by members of the band. Also, it should be made clear to the band, or to the disc jockey if one is hired, that songs emphasizing drugs and alcohol may not be played. The contract should state that rules are to be followed or payment will not be made.

The entertainment committee is responsible for securing any items necessary for events during the night. They are also in charge of hiring any special assistants, such as lifeguards, or security guards. After all the plans and assignments have been made, the committee should have a brainstorming session regarding any extra items that might be needed. Such extras might include small tables, chairs, trash cans, bug spray, a first aid kit, masking tape, scissors, felt-tip markers, and extension cords.

Working with the Other Committees

It is especially important for the entertainment committee to work with the other committees. Some of the questions that will need answers are these:

- Can the menu selected by the food committee be prepared and served at the facilities?
- Do the owners of the facilities have rules (no nail holes in the walls or no tape on the ceiling) that should be made known to the decorating committee?

Tips for the Entertainment Committee

Listed here are some suggestions from other entertainment committees around the county:

- Plan a schedule of activities that will last the whole night. When the

initial excitement of one activity begins to wane, have another upbeat idea ready. Don't allow long pauses between activities.

- While exciting activities will enhance Project Graduation, be sure to plan some more relaxing activities, too. The senior class won't be able to go full-steam all night unless there is a balance.
- Build a time capsule. Tell all the seniors to bring an item to place in the time capsule that will be opened at their 10th, 20th, or 25th reunion.
- Place an ad on the bulletin board at the nearest college asking for artists who can serve as caricaturists. Be sure to interview applicants before hiring.
- Have a group of seniors prepare a class history slide show for the party.
- Provide a paper-covered wall for graffiti that will be displayed at class reunions.
- Make a videotape of the party. This can be played back at the party's breakfast.

Food Committee

The food committee is responsible for planning the menu, as well as preparing and serving all meals and snacks. The committee leader should check with the town, county, or State Health Department regarding special provisions for food handling.

Some food committees include food choices on the Senior Survey distributed by the entertainment committee. Leaders of the entertainment and food committees should work together to coordinate this, if these questions will be asked on the entertainment survey.

If there is a theme, the food committee should make sure that the meals and snacks are somehow related to it. The decorations committee should be involved, as well, to coordinate table decorations with food.

After the menu has been selected and the other committees notified, the food committee must secure adult volunteers to prepare the food and keep tables replenished. This should be done in shifts, and a schedule determined to make sure there are adequate volunteers to cover all time slots. Prepare for the contingency of volunteers calling in sick.

Tips for the Food Committee

- Serve food all night rather than scheduling specific serving times that could interrupt dancing, games, and party continuity.
- Provide plenty of soft drinks. Students will drink more than you imagine. You will probably be able to return any that are unopened.
- Consider serving finger foods to avoid using (washing) cutlery.
- Make sure you have ample food for volunteers.
- Use multiple food stations. Some possibilities include tacos, deli sandwiches, salad bars, ice cream carts, popcorn machines, and soft drink stands.
- Make arrangement with a local homeless shelter or similar organization to pick up left over food.

Decorating Committee

The decorating committee is responsible for decorating the facilities and food tables. It is crucial that they work with the other committees, the Project Graduation chairperson, and the local fire department.

Tips for the Decorating Committee

- Balloons, balloons, balloons! Some could even be hung in a big net above the dance area to be released all at once.
- Crepe paper and streamers
- Posters

- Plastic wall coverings - long, wide rolls of plastic are available in many stores where landscaping and construction supplies are sold.
- A sign post in a central location, giving directions to various activities.
- A huge parachute hung over the entire area to provide a canopy atmosphere.
- Costumes - garters on men's sleeves, visors, black vests for a casino theme - and women in the costumes of the appropriate era.
- Dimmed lights . . . colored lights . . . rotating mirrored ball on the ceiling.

Public Relations Committee

The public relations (PR) committee is in charge of generating awareness and enthusiasm for Project Graduation among students and in the community. It is also the responsibility of the PR committee to thank the organizations who have donated money, merchandise, and services by listing them in a news release and by sending them notes of appreciation after Project Graduation is over. The two major target audiences that the PR committee must work with are the student body and the members of the community.

Target Audience: Student Body

Here are some of the ways the PR committee might publicize Project Graduation to students. The committee might decide to use some or all of these suggestions - or create their own!

- Ask the principal if various popular seniors can make announcements about the party on the public address system.
- Make Project Graduation flyers available at the school's sporting and social events.

- Ask the principal if the student body president can make an announcement at the Junior/Senior Prom, at graduation rehearsal, and at the graduation ceremony.
- Check with the principal about displaying Project Graduation prizes in a showcase at the high school.
- Have a senior on the paper staff write a monthly column in the school newspaper that describes the party plans as they develop.
- Print buttons to hand out to seniors when they buy tickets - "Project Graduation - The Greatest Party for the Great Class of 19_."
- Release helium balloons at school as part of your publicity campaign during lunch.
- Ask establishments popular with seniors if they will display Project Graduation promotional posters.
- Have the celebration date publicized on the school's athletic calendar.

Target Audience: The Community

Good relations within the community will enhance the success of Project Graduation. Here is some information on how to build good relations in the community through the media, civic groups, and businesses.

- Make sure your news releases and public service announcements are typed and double-spaced on one side of 8 ½" by 11" paper. Include the name, address, and phone number of a person to contact for more information. To let the editor know when your copy ends use this mark - ###. For an example of a news release, refer to the back of this information.
- When promoting your Project Graduation to the media, try to make appointments with local newspaper editors, TV news directors, and radio station managers. Give them a news release, a list of statistics about teenage drinking, drugging, and driving, and any other

information they might be able to use. You might also ask them to write or broadcast an editorial in favor of Project Graduation.

- Public service announcements (PSAs) for community nonprofit groups are often aired on radio and TV at no charge. In addition to a news release describing Project Graduation and a fact sheet, give TV and radio stations a very short PSA announcement that they can read over the air. "Sample PSA" may be found with this information.
- Encourage TV and radio stations to provide live coverage of Project Graduation. Coverage of the event will let the entire community share the fun, and it will encourage undergraduate students to organize a Project Graduation when they become seniors.
- Offer the chairperson, principal, or student body president to local radio and TV talk shows for interviews on Project Graduation.
- Contact civic groups and offer the Project Graduation chairperson, principal, or student body president as a speaker at any upcoming meetings.
- Consider using billboard space to promote Project Graduation. Local businesses might help the publicity committee rent the space if the owners won't donate it.
- Ask local businesses with "reader boards" to put up signs a week before graduation promoting the party.
- Contact the leaders of the other committees or the Project Graduation chairperson to obtain a complete list of all businesses and civic organizations who have donated merchandise, services, equipment, or facilities. Send them notes of appreciation immediately after Project Graduation to ensure good community relations for next year's Project Graduation.

Prizes Committee

Most Project Graduation parties include prizes that add to the suspense and excitement of the evening. A list of prizes that have been offered at other Project Graduations is included with this packet.

The members of the prize committee for your Project Graduation may find "Tips for Prize Committees" helpful.

Ticket Committee

The ticket committee's responsibilities include designing, printing, and selling the tickets; supplying ticket sellers with copies of a fact sheet for students who have questions about Project Graduation; working with the counselor's office to discreetly furnish free tickets to students unable to afford them; and providing lists containing students' names with corresponding ticket numbers for chaperones in case any tickets are lost on the night of the event.

When designing the Project Graduation tickets, the ticket committee should work closely with the leader of the prize committee. It may be desirable to include several "tear off" sections for special drawings, with spaces for the students to sign their names.

It's a good idea to keep the cost of the tickets as low as possible. One school that hosts a Project Graduation reports that five dollars is a good price. Hopefully, the rest of the money you'll need for the event will be donated or earned through fundraisers organized by the finance/fundraising committee. Many Project Graduation parties are free to seniors.

Coatroom Committee

The job of the coatroom committee is to provide a secure place for students to store purses, coats, prized party favors, and other possessions. One of the easiest ways to do this is to number large grocery bags and have correspondingly numbered claim checks. The adult volunteers who agree to work on each shift should be given the bag numbers and students' names on a clip board in case someone loses his or her claim check.

If water activities are in the schedule for your Project Graduation, the coatroom committee should consider furnishing plastic bags to hold wet swim suits.

Tips for Prize Committees

The committee leader should make up a list of business establishments for all members of the committee who are going to be soliciting merchandise. The list should include the merchants' addresses and should allow space for any pertinent information. Each committee member's list should be no longer than 15 to 20 merchants. Set a deadline for making contacts. Have weekly meetings to obtain progress reports.

Work closely with the finance/fundraising, food, and decorating committees so that you won't approach the same businesses for contributions.

Make sure that parents who are owners of local businesses are contacted in case they would like to donate prize items to Project Graduation. A form for such donations should be included in the initial letter to parents (see the "Sample Letter to Parents" with this information).

Display a poster that lists the prizes near the ticket sales table to generate student interest.

Make arrangements for storing the prizes before and at the party. Work with the coatroom committee members who will assign adult volunteers to guard seniors' valuables, including the prizes they win.

Consider wrapping the smaller prizes to add suspense.

Coordinate the prize drawing times or games that will require prizes with the entertainment committee so that activities will run smoothly.

Put a "from" tag on prizes so students will know who donated them. Some seniors will want to personally thank the donor.

Save many of the prizes for early morning hours when things begin to slow down at the party. Save the biggest prizes until breakfast, and make the rule that winners must be present.

Chaperone/Rules Committee

The duties of the chaperone/rules committee are to develop a list of rules; communicate the rules to students and parents through handouts, direct mail, the student newspaper, and posters; find adults who will volunteer to serve as chaperones; make time and area assignments for chaperones; have chaperones available to walk seniors to their cars; check with the Fire Marshall to see how many exits may be safely locked; furnish name tags for chaperones; set up a first aid station; request that the police patrol the area on the night of the party; and make sure all chaperones know what to do in case of any emergencies.

The chaperone/rules committee is also responsible for providing an adult volunteer to check band members for signs of drug or alcohol use, show them where to set up, and stay in the area for security reasons until other chaperones arrive.

Tips for Chaperone/Rules Committee

Here are some suggestions from chaperone/rules committees across the country:

- To protect against party crashers, it will be helpful if the chaperones at the door are teachers who know most of the students.
- Some Project Graduations have required students who attend to sign chemical-free contracts. You might consider this option.
- Consider asking chaperones to dress in costumes that complement the party's theme.
- You may want to have a volunteer to do "phone duty" in case there are any emergency phone calls from parents.
- Consider inviting some parents of juniors to act as chaperones. They may find the experience helpful when planning next year's party.

- Tell the adults who are serving as chaperones not to be any stricter than necessary to carry out the rules. The whole purpose of the party is *safe fun* for graduates.

Clean Up Committee

It is the job of the clean up committee to, of course, clean up after Project Graduation is over. Since you will need some sleep first, it's best to schedule clean up duty for the night after Project Graduation. Here are some ways to prepare for the post-party tidying:

- Check with the decorations committee to find out what supplies and tools the clean up committee will need to bring. Also ask if any of the decorations are to be saved for future Project Graduations.
- Find out from the food committee what arrangements have been made to donate leftover food to a charitable organization.
- Go to the facilities ahead of time and find out where the light switches are, what types of cleaning surfaces will be involved, etc.
- Ask the entertainment committee exactly what the owners of the facilities expect you to do. Can you leave plastic bags of trash in a certain area for pick up or will you be expected to take the trash with you? Are you to clean the restrooms, or will the regular custodians take care of that duty? What should you do with the keys after clean up?
- Provide many large trash cans around the party so that students will dispose of their own trash. This will save the clean up committee a great deal of work.

Rules for Adult Volunteers

When the members of the chaperone/rules committee are preparing the list of rules for students to follow at Project Graduation, they may also want to establish some basic rules for adult volunteers who will be working at the party. Several successful Project Graduations have communicated these two rules to volunteers:

- *All volunteers are expected to be alcohol-and drug-free upon arrival, and to remain alcohol-and drug-free while at Project Graduation.*
- *Volunteers are asked to leave Project Graduation after their shifts are over to avoid having too many adults at the party. It's important for everyone to feel that Project Graduation is a party for seniors.*

Rules for Seniors

The use or possession of alcohol or drugs will not be allowed.

- *A student possessing, using, or showing the effects of chemicals will be held in the party sick room until a parent or guardian arrives to pick up the student.*
- *Students will not be admitted to Project Graduation if they arrive after a certain time. Exceptions must be cleared with the Project Graduation chairperson.*
- *Any students who leave the party early must sign out. They will not be readmitted under any circumstances. (Chaperones at some Project Graduations call the parents of students who leave early to let them know that the students are on the road). If a student must go to a car for any reason, a male chaperone will accompany the student to the vehicle and back to the party.*

Take Some Advice!

According to graduating seniors, Project Graduation is always a smashing success. They have reported that their parties have been more fun than any in the history of their schools. In many communities, chemical-free celebrations have become a legacy, with secrets for great planning passed from one class to the next. In other areas, Project Graduation type parties

are a relatively new tradition, having been in place for only a few years. If your class has never experienced Project Graduation, take the advice of your generation - and get on board!

Project Graduation Timeline Form

Task/Activity	Responsibility	Resources Needed	Date Completed
<p>I. <u>Planning</u></p> <p>Meet with entire senior class to discuss PROJECT GRADUATION</p>	Senior Class or Project Graduation Advisor(s)		
Seniors interested in planning Project Graduation, contact the Project Graduation advisor	Seniors		
Meet with Project Graduation committee. Establish money needed.			
<p>II. <u>Fund Raising</u></p> <p>Design and choose fund raising activities to take place through the month of March.</p>	Advisor(s) and students	Fund raising ideas Media information	
<p>Fund raising activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • announce monetary goal 	Advisor(s), parent volunteers, students	Adult Supervision Adequate help Media coverage Photographer with black and white film	
<p>Survey senior class for:</p> <p>Activity(ies) wanted Place for activities Names of bands Kinds of foods Parting activity (closure)</p>	Advisor(s), students	Keyboarder, copier, collection point, paper, stapler, distribution point	

Fund raising activity: Announce money raised at fundraising event. Announce amount left to reach the goal.	Advisor(s), parent volunteers, students	Adequate supervision Adequate help Media coverage Photographer with black and white film	
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Task/Activity	Responsibility	Resources Needed	Date Completed
Review data from final survey Present results to senior class Establish committees: Five students, one adult Music, Food, Prizes, Place, Treasurer, Volunteers (parents, students) Media coverage, Photographer, Transportation • <u>Fund Raising Activity</u> Announce money made and needed	Advisor(s), students, parents, community	Newsprint, markers, typist, copier, phone numbers, deadlines Adequate supervision Adequate help Media coverage Photographer with black and white film	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with each committee to ascertain their needs, if any. Final payment to facility, band, caterers, photographer. Confirm commitment of volunteers for the participation. Confirm photographer for the participation and the parting. 	Advisor(s) Treasurer Advisor(s) and adult chairing volunteer com. Advisor(s) and chairperson of photography committee	Money and amounts Names and phone numbers Names and phone numbers	
Final Committee Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm all jobs completed Jobs not completed to be assigned Assign jobs to volunteers for participation 	Advisor(s), all committees	Job list for the night of participation	
III. Implementing <u>Setting up facility</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food tables Tables Chairs Decorations 	Facility contact person People from set-up committee	Key to facility Tablecloths, napkins, plates, cups, decorations	

Sample News Release

Seniors Will Be Chemical-Free Graduation Night

BETHESDA, MD - The graduating class of Forest Hills High School has decided to celebrate their graduation on May 15 with an all night, chemical-free graduation party to assure that none of the class of 19__ will be injured or killed in alcohol-related accidents.

"Nationally, more young people between the ages of 16 and 20 are injured or killed between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. in May and June than during any other time of the year," said Ricard Dreyton, principal of Forest Hills. "We want to make sure that all of our seniors have a chance to attend their 10-year reunion."

This will be Forest Hills' first "Project Graduation," the name used across the country for chemical-free graduation parties. It will be held at Fun Time Amusement Park, which will be open to seniors only from 6:00 p.m. until 5:00 a.m. A variety of activities has been planned for the night, including unlimited use of all rides, a dance featuring the band "Lockwood," hot air balloon rides, a trivia contest, and the reading of the class will.

Money, services, or merchandise was donated to Project Graduation by Handley's Temporaries, Amson's Foods, Forest Hills Art Supplies, Speedy's Bicycle Company, Hodges Sporting Goods, Hall Dairy, The Little Happy Shoppe, Mattdon's Hardware, Bracken, Sterm & Associates, Fun Time Amusement Park, Crawford Flowers, Kane Printing, Martin Photography, and Rock Entertainment, Inc.

"The Surgeon General has reported that life expectancy has improved over the past 75 years for every age group, except for the one that includes high school seniors," Dreyton said. Their death rate is higher today than it was 20 years ago because of drunk driving crashes. But, with Project Graduation, we're fighting back.

Sample Prizes:

The following are examples of prizes that have been donated to Project Graduations:

Audiotapes
Automobiles
Basketballs and Soccer Balls
Bike Helmets
Bikes
Birthday Cake Coupons
Blow Dryers
Bowling/skating sessions
Calculators
Cameras
Camping Tents
Candy
Car Stereos
Cases of Soft Drinks
Cash
Cassette Players
Cassette Tape Holders
CD's
Cedar chests
Comforters
Coolers
Coupons for goods or services
Dinner for two
Electric blankets
Electric curlers
Fast food for 12
Flashlight
Flowers
Furniture
Gift certificates
Haircuts
Headphones
Health Club Memberships

Ice Cream
Jogging suits
Luggage
Make-up
Pen and pencil sets
Perfume
Pizzas
Popcorn poppers
Portraits
Posters
Purses
Radio
Records
Roller skates
Running shoes
Scrapbooks and picture albums
Sit-up pillows
Ski passes
Stationery
Stuffed animals
T-shirts
Tanks of gas
Tanning sessions
Telephones
Tennis racquets
Tennis balls
Theater or movie tickets
Tote bags
Travel clocks
TV sets
U.S. Savings Bonds
Video rentals
Videotapes
Wallets
Watches

Fundraising Ideas:

50/50 raffle
A-thons (bowl, rock, think, etc.)
Booth at county fair
Boxing night
Breakfast with Santa calendar
Car raffle
Car smash
Celebrity basketball
Class-faculty competition
Dime-a-dip dinner
Ethnic dinner
Faculty vs. students
Family portraits
Friendly balloons
Hugging booth
Kissing booth
Laugh-a-grams
Light bulb sale
Mock wedding
People power hours
Pocket calendar sale
Pot luck dinner
Raffle from donations
Sell flowers
Space on the Sponge throw
Stuffed animals
Sundae sale
Surfing contest
Teacher auction
Turkey contest
Basketball shoot
Polaroid pics of celebrities and you (plus card board models)
Weight lifting
Junk car raffle
Ms./Mr. America contest
Garage sale
Newspaper drive
Stick horse baseball
Hush day
Battle of the bands

Hypnotist assembly
Bake sale
Birthday cake sale
Unbirthday card delivery
Rent a parking space
Corny carnival
Haunted house
Fashion show
Leftover yearbook pics
Sandwich boards
Wheelchair basketball
Singing-grams
Leg/arm contests
Monte Carlo night
Fun night cruise-a-thon
Gangster day
Faculty vs. radio staff
Newspaper staff vs. student council
Family night
Sports night
Stationery sale
Wreath sale
Citywide scavenger hunt
Sports entry fees
Participation fees
Donkey basketball
Concerts
Coffee house
Dutch auction
Limo and driver raffle
Bonus activities books
Coupon event book
Coffee cups
Sell a parking space (closer to school)
Shave a faculty beard
Sell a room to decorate
Foot warmers
Book sale
Softball game
Student talent show
Dunk tank
Sell pies
Pizza night flea market
Night time feature film
Treasure hunt

Candy sale
Halloween sale
Dinner served to community clubs
People scavenger hunt
Yearbook signing party
Haircut-a-thon
Wash-a-dog (carefully)
Homecoming carnival
Candy-gram
Match game (dating game)
Carnations
Antique show
Art floor show (gym floor)
Button Booth
School bus wash
Drawings
All-school barbecue
Recycling drive
Ice cream social
Turkey sale
Christmas trees
Circus day
Dances
Pie throw
Spring fair
Yearbook covers
Helium balloons
Friendship balloons
Senior show
Kiss-a-gram
Male beauty pageant
Mistletoe sale
Commercial bus wash
Ladder climb
Rope climb
Gong show
Class tee-shirts
Student directories
Highest bidder throws
pie/egg/water balloon
Yearbook graffiti
Frozen bananas
Monograms
Faculty talent show
Stuff a Volkswagen

Stuff a phone booth
 Balloon cars
 Newspaper space on front
 page - buck a name
 Chinese fortune cookies
 (student fortunes)
 Donut sales
 Tennis sale
 Dill pickles
 Juice day
 Cantaloupe day
 Community work day
 (rent a student)
 Lemons/oranges
 Money jar voting
 Band aid concession
 Silent movie day
 Halloween greasepaint on
 little kids
 Karate demonstration
 Dance in the quad
 Frisbee contest
 Carrot-gram
 Frisbee golf
 Beard-growing contest
 Exercise contest
 Cartwheel contest
 Sidewalk sale
 Hat sale
 Stadium pillows
 Vending machines
 Salad bar
 Community products
 Penny vote: king/queen
 Private plane rides
 Hot air balloon rides
 Private car rides
 Bring your own pillow
 concerts
 Drama in the round
 Couple pageant
 Parent pageant
 Posters
 Santa grams
 Monogrammed frisbee
 sale
 Squirt gun contest
 Raffle at halftime
 Fantasy Island wish-
 come- true

Sell wishes
 Rent wishes
 Megaphones
 Sell scarves
 Giant coloring book
 Sell magazine
 subscriptions
 Progressive dinner
 License plates with
 school emblems/co
 lors/logos
 Cheese tasting party
 Bazaars
 Dinner dance marathon
 Sno-cones
 Football seats
 Elephant rides
 Lunch box auction
 Pie auction
 Plant sale
 Buy a kiss
 Paint house numbers on
 curb
 Shirt sale/clothes sale/
 book sale
 Malt shoppe
 Free-throw contest
 Family night/picnic
 Strawberry crepes
 Hot chocolate sale
 Country band
 Bluegrass/square dance
 Bingo night
 Kids game day
 Board game day
 Bluegrass picnic
 Multi-cultural day
 Hollywood shorties
 basketball game
 Bumper stickers
 Voting for faculty team
 Santa's mailbox
 Customized stickers
 Turkey race
 Skiing movie at lunch
 Surfing movie at lunch
 Kingsley machine (gold
 stamping of anything)
 Car rally/bike rally/
 walking rally

Community flea market
 Letters to the world in
 helium balloons
 Radio commercials
 Monster movie during
 Halloween
 Hometown fair
 Pro teams against varsity
 Disco contest
 Powder puff game
 Pancake sale/waffle sale
 Hot potato sale
 Singing grams
 Almost anything goes
 World's largest monopoly
 game
 Chess tournament
 Graffiti page
 Hollywood auction
 Babysitting service
 Las Vegan night
 Candy guess (jelly beans)
 Candles
 Sprit flags
 Bunny grams
 Deeds to square inch
 block of campus
 Dance: charge by length
 of
 arm/legs/waist/height/
 hair, etc.
 Health food
 Skate-a-thon
 Housework
 Over-forty dance
 Pick fruit
 Pizza kit
 Popcorn kit
 Raffle off marching band
 Raffle dinners for two
 Necktie day
 All-night bowling
 Hot lemonade
 Shopping center clean-up
 Telephone interviews for
 large companies
 Calendars for community
 Multi-school computer
 dance

Faculty baby picture
contest
Parents' prom

Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents of Seniors:

Plans are underway for an exciting graduation night party for the seniors at _____High School. The students have worked hard, and they deserve Project Graduation - a celebration that is both fun and safe. Project Graduation is a tradition at many high schools across the country, and it's a tradition that we would like to start at _____High School. Basically, Project Graduation is an all night, chemical-free party that is organized by the seniors, with help from parents, school personnel, and business people in the community. The party will be well chaperoned. It is our hope that Project Graduation will reduce the chance of any of our students being injured or killed in alcohol-related car accidents.

To make Project Graduation the biggest and best party ever, we will need your help. Please fill out and return the forms below to the school office.

My child _____has my permission to attend the Project Graduation Party on May, 15, 19____.

Parents Signature

Telephone Number for Verification

Yes ___ (✓) I would like to help out with Project Graduation. You can count on my assistance in the following area:

(Please number from 1 to 10 in the order of your preference)

___ Finance/fundraising

___ Prizes

___ Entertainment

___ Tickets

___ Food

___ Chaperones/rules

___ Decorations

___ Coatroom

___ Public relations

___ Clean-up

Name: _____

Address: _____

Day & Evening Telephone Numbers: _____

My business would like to donate a prize or cash to help make Project Graduation a success.

Your name: _____

Organization's Name: _____

Address: _____

Day & Evening Telephone Numbers: _____

Type of Prize or Amount of Donation: _____

Sample Senior Survey

High School Senior Survey

To: Class of '_____

From: Project Graduation Planning Committee

To make our graduation night even more special, we would like to plan an exciting all-night party. We would like to know exactly what the senior class would like to do and eat so that the party will be a night to remember forever. Please take a minute to fill out the form below:

A. Activities: There will be lots of action all night long, and we are considering including some of the activities listed below. Please indicate your first, second, third, fourth, and fifth choices, and fill in the blanks that require answers.

- ___ Racquetball
- ___ Swimming/Pool Games
- ___ Gym Games (basketball, volleyball, etc.)
- ___ Casino Games
- ___ Dancing How many hours? _____
- What kind of music? _____
- Favorite Band? _____
- Favorite DJ? _____
- Favorite Record? _____
- ___ Entertainment (performers)
- ___ Movie (name)_____
- ___ Carnival Booths
- ___ Other Ideas (list)_____
- _____

B. Foods: Select your first and second preference for a midnight meal:

- ___ Pizza
- ___ Hamburgers
- ___ Spaghetti
- ___ Submarine Sandwiches

Please list your first, second, third, fourth, and fifth favorite snacks:

C. Soft Drinks: Please list your first, second, and third favorite soft drinks:

D. Please list any other ideas you have to make the party a success!

Sample PSA's

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS For Immediate Release

Central High Will Have Project Graduation

Get involved in making the 19__ Central High School graduation party exciting, fun, and safe. Work with senior students to plan this all night, chemical-free party. For more information contact (name)_____ at (Tel.:) _____.

#

Start a new tradition in Central City. Students are planning an all night, chemical-free graduation celebration for the 19__ seniors. For information on how you can help call (name)_____ at (Tel.:)_____.

#

The all night, chemical-free graduation party that is being organized by the senior students at Central High needs your help. Donations of money, services, or merchandise for prizes are now being accepted. To find out more about making your donation, contact (name) _____ at (Tel.:) _____.

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The Maine Office of Substance Abuse has based this updated manual
on an earlier publication created by:

Florida Informed Parents, Inc.
Illinois Board of Education
Iowa Department of Public Instruction
Maine Highway Safety Committee
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Ohio Department of Highway Safety
Oregon Traffic Safety Commission
Texans' War on Drugs
Texas Department of Highway and Public Transportation