

READY! SET! GLUE!

Woodridge Primary School Cuyahoga, Ohio

Parent Clubs are happening at Woodridge Primary School, and enthusiasm is very high! The goal of these grade level clubs is to empower parents to be the first and primary teachers of their children. By offering six meetings per year for parents of each grade, teachers hope to present the monthly curriculum in learning packets of home activities that link with school learning objectives. It is a relaxed atmosphere where parents can feel free to ask questions, get to know their children's teachers, and bounce ideas and suggestions off of other parents.

The Parent Clubs are for all caregivers in our school who want to learn how to work more effectively with children. Interested staff members plan monthly child-adult activities for use at home. During the club meetings, the staff demonstrate how to use activities to parents seated around tables in a "make and take" learning environment.

The idea to form Parents Clubs was one of many ideas generated two years ago by the Partnership Action Team. Two Action Team meetings and several staff grade level meetings occurred prior to the first Parent Club. Teachers generated their own ideas as to appropriate learning activities; invitations were sent; and supplies were purchased. Parents were asked to enroll in the club for the year, to attend as many meetings as they could, and to invite a substitute if they were unable to attend.

All grades (K-2) are involved. Parents of all children are invited, and 14 out of 16 classroom teachers participate. All grade level clubs meet on the same night, but in different rooms. A minimum of two teachers, and sometimes all the grade level teachers, present the curriculum.

Attendance has averaged about seventy parents at each meeting. In January, all parents received an evaluation summary of the clubs. One hundred percent of the respondents said the clubs were very helpful both for the children and the parents. A more lengthy evaluation form will be used at the last club meeting in May.

Kindergarten club members were very appreciative of the short presentation regarding kindergartners, second semester, and the information their children were learning. Kindergarten staff shared meanings of markings on the reports as well. During the club meeting, parents received home activities for the month, including two mini books to make with their children, and materials for a game of counting by tens and recognizing two-digit numerals.

At the last first grade parent meeting, the first grade team worked together to choose

three projects related to the current math topic—money. Parents made a magnetic money board, learned rules, and created a game board for a simple money game, and turned an empty box into an easy money counting activity. One parent commented, "I really look forward to this. No kids. I can sit back and relax with a cup of coffee and make some really neat things to take home." Other parents commented they were pleased with the number of materials they were able to make and keep.

Second grade parents found the meetings to be informative as well as entertaining. Two teachers entertained the parents with a humorous skit illustrating reading strategies. The strategies could be used to help children develop stronger reading skills, not only to be used this year but in years to come. The skit was followed with hands on spelling activities that could be used to practice weekly spelling words. A parent mentioned how much he enjoyed the meeting, especially the skit. He found the activities to be very helpful and looked forward to using them with his child. He would like to encourage other parents to take advantage of this opportunity to participate in their children's education.

Offering child-care as well as transportation are important contributions to the success of Parent Clubs. Because parents are so busy, we have a telephone committee who calls each family prior to the meeting, asking if child-care or transportation is needed, and reminding them of the meeting place and time.

Teachers are very good at shopping at Sam's Club, Pat Katan's, and other discount stores for manipulative and hands-on materials. The PTO usually gives about \$100 for materials, and the Principal's Fund is also a resource. We collaborate with the Even Start program to purchase some materials. Our Ohio Partnership grant provides some money, as does the Akron Knight Foundation. We do not know about funding for next year at this time. The PTO as well as the Principal's Fund are places to begin.

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