

PARENT BOOK TALKS

Mill Street Elementary School Naperville, Illinois

Parent Book Talks were designed to motivate the reluctant reader and encourage pre-readers to begin reading. This activity started in 1997-98, and was refined during the 1998-99 school year.

Parents were given the chance to make classroom presentations about current novels that were linked to the curriculum. Nineteen parents worked with teachers to select novels so that the majority of students in grades 3-5 could read them independently. Parent volunteers received one and a half hours of training from the reading specialist that focused on the guidelines for presentation content, length, and other issues relevant to working with students.

Teachers and volunteers arranged convenient times for the Book Talks. Sometimes two parents presented together. Often, the volunteer dressed up like a character from the book and made the presentation from the character's perspective. Following the presentation, a copy of the novel was presented to each class so that students could access the book immediately. Students were expected to read and rate the novel, and then pass it on to classmates. Teachers frequently read the book themselves so they also would be able to talk about the book with the students.

The novels have been hot items. Not only did the parent volunteers pique the students' interest in the books by providing background knowledge, but word of mouth has also increased the enthusiasm about reading. Changes to Parent Book Talks will include improving the scheduling process and the readability of the books. Our goal was to encourage students to read more independently, and with most of the classes reading the novels that have been presented, Mill Street Elementary is well on its way to reaching this goal.

Sue Doenges, Action Team Chair
(630) 420-6353