
SCIENCE ALL NIGHT

B.U.I.L.D. Academy

Buffalo, New York

B.U.I.L.D. Academy has developed a Science Fair Night in order to raise our school's scores on the New York State (NYS) Program Evaluation Test in Science Grade 4. When we began the Science Fair Night three years ago, the program allowed students and family members to view the work and projects of the students in all grade levels Pre-K through 8. In the 1998-1999 school year, we added a new component for the fourth grade.

Fourth grade is when students take the NYS Science Evaluation test. Since the test is a hands-on evaluation, we decided to incorporate some hands-on experiments for students to participate in with their parents. In the school's Home Economics room, students worked through a number of experiments while verbally making observations and drawing conclusions. Students and parents participated enthusiastically, and their feedback was positive. Though our NYS Science Evaluation test scores did not rise that year, we decided that we were on the right track in trying to encourage parents and students to explore more hands-on activities together.

During the 1999-2000 school year, we expanded the hands-on experiment portion of our Science Fair Night to include stations at the primary, intermediate, and secondary levels. Family members and students conducted experiments together. They recorded observations, results, and conclusions in a journal provided at each station. This enabled the parents to see the types of problems their children would face during May testing.

We held the program in the school gym to accommodate the larger number of participants. Teachers from each grade level took responsibility for setting up appropriate experiments. Some time for set-up of the experiments was required. We needed a nominal budget because the experiments typically used everyday, readily available materials. Teachers donated their time.

The positive comments and the degree of participation, especially at the primary and intermediate levels, encouraged B.U.I.L.D. Academy. We intend to assess the impact of this program on NYS Science Evaluation test scores as soon as the spring testing results are available.

Through the Science Fair Night, we have accomplished several goals. First, we have successfully developed a program that expands our family-school partnership. Second, we have highlighted B.U.I.L.D. Academy's interest in the field of science. Third, students and adults have been provided with the opportunity to develop the ability to use the scientific method to analyze the world around them. Students enjoyed the opportunity to share their school experience with parents and vice versa. Lines of communication opened. We are hopeful that the problem solving aspect of this activity will enable students to see the world from new perspectives in science as well as in other curriculum areas.

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