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## **BUILDING SCIENCE SUNDAES**

### **BUILD Academy**

#### **Buffalo, New York**

Motivated by the success of its Science Night initiatives over the past three years, BUILD Academy, a Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school, continued to concentrate its efforts on improving student performance on state science tests and increasing students' interest in science.

The original program, initiated in the 1997-1998 school year, involved displaying student science projects school-wide. The next year, in an attempt to model testing procedures on the New York State Science Evaluation Test, the school incorporated opportunities for students to participate in hands-on science activities. Students worked through a number of short experiments while making verbal observations. Only fourth grade students participated in the program, and while participation was lively, the event was not as well attended as hoped.

During the 1999-2000 school year, Science Night expanded the hands-on experiments to include stations at the primary, intermediate, and secondary levels. Teachers from each grade level set up experiments linked to their curriculum. The program was located in the school gym so that parents and students could complete the experiments together. This time, students recorded observations, results, and conclusions in a journal provided at each station. The experiments helped parents see the types of problems their children would be asked to solve during state testing.

The 2000-2001 program encouraged participation at all grade levels, especially the secondary level. Seventh and eighth grade teachers designed interactive activities and assigned students to discuss the science behind the experiments. Secondary students seemed excited to make presentations during the program. In addition, the school's PTA sponsored an Ice Cream Social to increase family participation.

Science Nights required little funding because experiments typically utilized materials that were readily available, and teachers donated their time. Implementation of this program has highlighted the school's commitment to providing a strong science curriculum for students. It also has demonstrated the importance of parent partnerships. As the role of parents expanded, so did the success of the program. By continually developing the program, the school will be able to serve the science needs of the students and their families in the future.

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