
OZZIE'S READING CLUB

Highlands Elementary School

Naperville, Illinois

Ozzie's Reading Club, a reading incentive program sponsored by the Kane County Cougars minor league baseball team, encouraged students to increase their reading at home. During the eight-week reading program, approximately 400 students met their identified reading goals, and their families were involved in the process throughout.

On January 14th, Ozzie the Cougar, the baseball team's mascot, came to Highlands School to kick off Ozzie's Reading Club. Students attentively listened to stories read by baseball players, the town mayor, parents, and the principal. They got autographs from the players, and cheered themselves on as they prepared to boost their reading.

Throughout the eight-week program, students read to round the bases (first, second, third, and home plate). Each grade level had a goal in minutes, pages, or books to read during each two-week increment (two weeks equaled one base). The reading was to be done outside of school with the family or independently. Parents served as coaches, fans, and umpires for students' reading. At each two-week increment, a parent had to sign a verification form for the student to reach the base. A poster outside of each classroom displayed students' advancement from base to base, and a bulletin board in the school's hallway posted the names of all participating students.

Students who completed the program (made a homerun) received a ticket order form that was good for one free ticket to one of the Ozzie's Reading Club game nights. The form also had spaces where families could order additional tickets for a nominal fee. The tickets included a voucher for a free t-shirt, hot dog, and soda for each participant. The school was very lenient in making the ticket order forms available after the due date to any student who needed to catch up.

The culminating event was the baseball game. All Highlands' families sat in the same general area. Many students attended with both parents and even their grandparents to watch the game and enjoy the activities. Everyone arrived forty-five minutes before the start of the game, and the children marched in a parade led by Ozzie the Cougar. Each participating school was announced and the children were commended for their hard work in completing the program.

They also received t-shirts that they could have autographed by the mascot and team players. After the game, children went onto the field to run the bases just like the players do during the game.

Ozzie's Reading Club energized team spirit in the school community around reading. Participating for the first time in a school-wide reading incentive program, Highlands School hit a grand slam.

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