
FAMILIES WHO WRITE & READ SUCCEED NIGHT

Park Avenue School Danbury, Connecticut

Everybody has a story to tell. That is the basic premise behind Park Avenue School's Families Who Write & Read Succeed Night held each year in early fall. The Reading and Writing Action Teams, which integrate family involvement with academic goals for students, designed the educational and fun evening focused on improving reading and writing levels for all Park Avenue students. The event emphasizes the importance of reading with children both at home and in school.

At the Families Who Write & Read Succeed Night, the Action Team Co-Chairs present a family-oriented project to the families and students. Each family receives 5-6 blank pages that are three-hole punched, art supplies such as crayons and markers, and a theme to write about. Themes have included helping hands, my family, love, and poetry. For the Helping Hands theme, the pages had a story starter printed on the bottom such as, "I help my family when I ____." The families all work together choosing a title, writing and illustrating a story, and publishing the book by tying it all together with ribbon. Spanish and Portuguese language translators assist families as needed. The children love to see parents draw with crayons. Families enjoy reading their family-made books. The finished books are wonderful keepsakes from this enjoyable evening.

The Reading and Writing Action Teams have used several strategies to annually increase family attendance at the Families Who Write and Read Succeed Night. Prior to the event, the school sends home flyers announcing the evening with a tear-off response card for families to reply. The Reading Team and Writing Team also publicize the event in the school newsletter, *Pathways to Partnerships*, which is also translated into Spanish and Portuguese.

The teams collaborate with the community to bolster resources available at the event for students and families. The Reading Team collects new and used book donations to distribute at the event. Each child leaves the evening with a goodie bag filled with a new book, a bookmark, and a pencil. The team also sets up tables full of free used books for anyone attending. Last year, the Reading Team invited a famous author, Thalia Marakis, to Park Avenue to share the day and evening with students.

The Families Who Write and Read Succeed Night celebrates and shares the joy of reading and writing in a relaxed and caring atmosphere. As one Reading Team member remarked, “We continue to create a positive reinforcement for the love of reading.”

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