
FAMILY SCIENCE NIGHT

Highlands Elementary School

Naperville, Illinois

Highlands Elementary wanted to bring parents and students together to understand how science concepts exist in everyday life. This area was selected because Highlands' 2001 ISAT test results indicated physical science was the weakest subtest. The goal for Family Science Night was to show science concepts in a fun and exciting manner.

The family science night linked to the following school goals:

- Students become increasingly literate in language arts, mathematics, sciences and the fine arts,
- Students share responsibility for their education with educators, parents, and the community,
- Students are intrinsically motivated as they experience joy in learning, and
- Students think creatively, integrate information, and work to cooperatively solve real life problems.

A small committee comprised of two parents and a faculty advisor investigated several different science-themed alternatives ranging from corporate and museum sponsored programs to self-developed hands-on experiments. After a thorough evaluation, the committee determined that a science presentation best fit the needs of the school for the 2001-2002 school year.

The team selected scientist Steve Belliveau from Getting Excited About Science who was recommended by the Du Page County Board of Education. The School/Family/Community Partnership (SFCP) team also chose him because he offers follow-up events, including hands-on stations for future family science nights.

Three weeks prior to Family Science Night, the main hallway bulletin board was decorated in the science night theme to generate interest in the event. The bulletin board was in 3-D with wild colors and featured a mad scientist, an airplane flying overhead with a science night banner, a large light bulb, a tornado, and several beakers with overflowing metallic bubbles. At the same time, a backpack flyer with an RSVP request was sent home with all children, and a reminder notice was sent home the week before the event. The RSVP request provided an attendance estimate for room set-up.

Over 300 people attended the Family Science Night on December 5, 2001, from 7:00PM to 8:00PM. A stage was set up in Highlands' gym with the scientist's equipment. Mr. Belliveau performed the experiments on stage, but moved to the audience when explaining scientific principles. Mr. Belliveau performed six experiments and explained the principles for each one. Parents and students participated in the experiments.

The presenter charged \$340, which included all supplies for the experiments. The school's art supplies were utilized to create the bulletin board, and the backpack flyers were copied at the school, minimizing the cost of the project. The SFCP Team funded the evening from their annual budget, which is donated by the Highlands' Home and School Association. The cost per attendee was approximately \$1.13, making this night a very good value.

This was one of the most attended School/Family/Community Partnerships activities at Highlands. The 300 people, including over 100 students, attending the night represented all grade levels. Everyone enjoyed the presentation. Most importantly, it showed students and families how fun science can be and how intertwined science is with everyday life.

The SFCP Team plans a follow-up event using Steve Belliveau and his hands-on science experiments for the 2002-2003 school year. One enhancement will be a take-home flyer highlighting the key scientific concepts to be distributed at the end of the event.

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