

WRESTLE WITH A GOOD BOOK

The Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence Buffalo, New York

The Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence has established a reading program that encourages family and community involvement in students' reading process. This four-week program contains many strategies to involve our entire school, parents, students, community members, and staff, in supporting improved reading scores.

This year's reading theme, "Wrestle with a Good Book," also promoted physical fitness and healthy eating. The home and career, physical education, and homeroom teachers worked closely to plan activities to enable the students to complete a true reading marathon of 26 days of reading.

Each day we welcomed parents, grandparents, family members, and community leaders from Buffalo as guest readers. Volunteers from the community included the superintendent, administrators from city hall, the fire commissioner, police officers, firemen, a children's author, the mayor, and judges. Each volunteer had their picture taken in the classroom while reading and then their picture was placed on our Dr. Lydia T. Wright Wall of Fame in our main hall. Each reader was rewarded with a special pen with the school name and phone number printed on it in the hopes that they would return to read again and again. Over the four-week period, we had over 50 volunteers read with our students.

We also planned many activities throughout the month to involve our entire school community in reading. A few of the family and community involvement activities included:

- Our seventh and eighth grade students read to our younger students for 2003 seconds (a total of 33 minutes);
- For the second consecutive year, we included our "Get Caught Reading" activity, which was featured in *Promising Partnership Practices 2002*. This year we caught 171 students reading at home during the four nights the program was in effect—almost three times as many students as year one;
- Seventh and eighth grade students created a Healthy Minds Healthy Body newsletter that went home to all families; and
- As a culminating activity, our principal dressed as a sumo wrestler and wrestled with a good book.

The four-week program was highly successful in motivating many children to read on their own as well as getting our community active in our school. The children strove to complete their reading marathons and most did. The enthusiasm for this program was contagious, and everyone became involved in reaching our goal.

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