
PARENTS AS AUTHORS

Loreto Elementary School

Los Angeles, California

Loreto Elementary School is located in a low socio-economic area where many parents are newly arrived immigrants and have minimal schooling and/or writing ability. In an effort to involve more parents to support their children's writing, Loreto Elementary sent a cadre of teachers to a district training focused on involving parents as authors. The district training was led by two prominent children's authors. After the training, the Loreto teachers invited all parents to a series of writing workshops.

For about three months, the Loreto teachers met on Thursday mornings from 8:00-9:30 am with parents interested in learning about the writing process. Parents wrote books about themselves and acrostic poems about their children. (An acrostic poem is a series of lines in which certain letters, usually the first in each line, form a name or motto when read in sequence.) Parents expanded their poems and added pictures of family. The teachers conducted extra workshops for those parents who struggled with writing. When parents completed the books, they made a video presentation of their autobiographies and gave the video presentation and their books to the children.

The administration supported the workshops by arranging for classroom coverage for the teachers conducting the writing workshops. The administration also provided

the materials to construct the parent books.

Ten parents attended the workshops. Their beautiful books demonstrated parents' commitment to the project. In addition, a fifth-grade teacher used the training with the parents of her 40 students to create culmination gifts for the children. At the end-of-year ceremony, parents read passages from their books to their children. The students loved their books, and the teacher plans to train parents as authors every year.

Parents had a better understanding of how children learn to write using the writing process. One parent said, "I never thought I could be a writer, and now I can share this book I wrote with my child." "I loved this training, and now I have three beautiful books that my children will be able to share with their own children," stated another parent.

Next year, Loreto Elementary will integrate the workshops into their classroom curriculum to increase the number of parents learning about the writing process. They anticipate doubling the number of parents who participate. Not only will the numbers of parents involved in their children's education increase, but so to will the numbers of children respecting their parents' knowledge and life experiences.

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