

FAMILY FUN FIELD TRIPS East Taunton Elementary School Taunton, Massachusetts

The Action Team for Partnerships at East Taunton Elementary created Family Fun Field Trips to expand curriculum-related learning opportunities for kindergarten through fourth-grade families.

East Taunton Elementary is in an urban area south of Boston. Our children's families primarily have a limited income that leaves little room for anything beyond the essentials. The Action Team reviewed the results of statewide testing and found that many of our students were at a disadvantage because they lacked a natural knowledge about their surroundings. For example, one question asked students to plan a schedule for a day at a museum. Many of our students could not respond to this question, as they had never been to a museum.

The Action Team developed a plan to take families to events, museums, cultural programs, and historical activities on weekends. The plan included transporting the families, creating activities at the venues, and providing funding to reduce or negate any cost.

The Action Team planned fundraising events and sought community sponsors to help fund this project. Next, they surveyed the school community to see which activities the families would most like to attend. Events and programs that had a direct correlation to our curriculum were chosen. The trips, so far, have included the Museum of Science, a cran-

berry harvest, and The New England Aquarium. Over 250 families have participated in each trip.

Each trip had a cost reflective of transportation and entrance fees. The costs varied from \$3 to \$15 per person. Fundraising or local business support then reduced these costs so that no family ever paid more than \$3 per person. A local travel company provided transportation by luxury motor coach, and arrangements with the different venues provided entrance fees at a discounted rate.

The challenges were predominantly in the area of scheduling weekend events. We were concerned that families would be too busy to participate. We surveyed parents to find out what times would work best, and scheduled our programs accordingly. We were also concerned about funding, but the community responded generously.

Since this program's inception, there has been a steady increase in student performance on statewide assessments. These field trips enable families to experience the rich culture and history of our region as it applies to their child's curriculum and engages everyone in the learning process.

William Simpson and Michelle Lewry,
Action Team Chairpersons
(508) 821-1330
Fhoeg@tauntonschools.org