

Reading about Science on Dr. Seuss's Day

*John F. Kennedy School
Windsor, Connecticut*

John F. Kennedy School experimented with a new way to celebrate Dr. Seuss' 100th birthday. This year's celebration focused specifically on literacy in science to engage first-through fifth-grade students and their families with books that focus on science in everyday activities. During an early morning breakfast on March 2nd, children received a new science-related book and enjoyed quality reading time with their parent or caregiver.

More than 200 students and their family members attended the before-school event. Each child selected a grade-level appropriate book as their parent signed in. Pre-school level books were available for younger siblings to read and take home with them. Family members then gathered their bagels and drinks, proceeded to a designated "read-in area" (media center, art room, gymnasium, and some classrooms), and enjoyed reading their new book while eating breakfast. A surprise visit from the Cat in the Hat added to the festivities.

Each member of the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) volunteered to take on one or more responsibilities to plan the event. A member of the ATP contacted several national book clubs to acquire non-fiction science books for all students. One company volunteered to donate the needed 419 science books. However, three weeks prior to the event, the company modified its donation to only 200 books for grades one and two. More than 200 books for the upper grades were still required. The ATP member contacted local businesses to seek financial help to acquire the missing books. Two local businesses offered assistance. With less than one week to go, the ATP purchased

200 science-related books at a local discount store.

Community collaboration continued to produce the event at no cost to the school or families. The ATP obtained gift certificates from five local grocery stores and discount clubs to help buy food and paper goods for the breakfast. A bagel company several towns away generously provided 400 bagels at a greatly reduced price, and gave balloons, bookmarks, and coupons for the event. Another local business supplied the money for the bagels. The ATP provided coffee for the event.

Parents and staff members appreciated the opportunity to participate in a school-wide program that was fun, fulfilling, and time-limited. Several parents e-mailed thank-you notes. One parent wrote, "I would like to commend the JFK School and its staff for their efforts this morning. I think it is an activity that is extremely worthwhile for the children as well as the parents and teachers." A teacher commented, "It was neat to see the parents reading with their children."

Providing students with a new science-related book at their proper reading level enhanced the students' knowledge. Students saw how reading can be connected to many activities and enjoyed reading with their families. One second-grade student's feedback summed it up for the students: "It was cool that we got books, and it was fun."

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