

# Family Holiday Literacy Event

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*Leo Politi Elementary School  
Los Angeles, California*

**D**uring a brainstorming session involving the principal, literacy coaches, and teachers, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Leo Politi Elementary School decided to revamp their family holiday event. In the past, the school had hosted an event in which families visited with Santa and received complimentary refreshments. The ATP decided to make the event more special for families by distributing books and providing literacy workshops for parents. They also chose the Family Holiday Literacy Event to support the school improvement goal of increasing student reading achievement.

On the day of the event, each student received a trade book to take home and keep. Families returned to the school that evening for the workshops and Las Posadas, a traditional Latin American holiday event. Teachers facilitated the eight workshops. Some of the highlights included:

- **Making Family Albums:** Parents and children discussed family memories and chose several to include in their family album. Using paper, glue, markers, and other materials, parents and children worked together to draw and write about their significant events. Then, they glued the pictures and descriptions into an album, which they took home as a keepsake.
- **Making Holiday Cards:** Students demonstrated for their parents how to use Kid Pix, one of the school's computer programs. Parents and children worked together to design and print holiday cards for friends and family.
- **Celebrating Kwanzaa:** Two teachers read

aloud a story of Kwanzaa in both English and Spanish. Then, parents and their children worked together to make a traditional Kwanzaa artifact.

Planning for the event began in October, when the ATP brainstormed ways to improve their traditional holiday event. The administration explained the new and improved Family Holiday Literacy Event to the teachers at a staff meeting, and solicited volunteers to meet for further planning sessions. The principal agreed to allocate some staff meeting time for teachers to plan and organize their workshops. The Title I coordinator volunteered to order the books, and aides sorted the books by grade level when they arrived. The ATP collected workshop titles and descriptions from teachers to make a brochure. Parents received the brochure about a week prior to the event for a preview of the evening. On the day of the event, a staff member dressed up as Santa and passed out the books to the children. At each grade level, students could choose one out of two books as gifts.

The largest expense for the literacy event was the books given to the children. The school's corporate sponsor covered the \$6,000 cost. The School-Community Liaison solicited donations of food from local retailers, and publicized the event through them. Additional publicity came from the school's office, which sent fliers home with students, and announced the event at the English Language Advisory Council meeting.

In the future, the school hopes to include other community members and support staff from the school in organizing the event.

For schools considering a Family Holiday Literacy Night, Leo Politi Elementary suggests planning well in advance. If possible, schools should schedule the event before the school year begins, so that the staff can set aside the date. Also, large quantities of books or other materials should be ordered early, since school orders may take many months to process.

The Family Holiday Literacy Event strengthened the ties between parents, teachers, and students. Every student liked receiving a book to take home. Parents and children enjoyed working closely on holiday activities that involved reading and writing. A parent commented, “The ideas I got were very helpful. Thank you.” As one teacher described, “Working with our students in a less formal environment, outside of the daily instructional setting, was fun and rewarding.”

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