

Family Literacy Nights

*Como Park Elementary School
Saint Paul, Minnesota*

Como Park Elementary School has a large population of English as a Second Language (ESL) students. The school wanted to support ESL students' reading development by helping their families learn how to help their children with reading at home. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) believed that Family Literacy Nights would help parents learn from teacher modeling, which in turn would help students learn from parent modeling.

Family Literacy Nights, held every third Tuesday of the month, brought students, families, and staff together to eat food and to learn literacy strategies. During the event, families divided up into grade-level groups to learn specific reading strategies modeled by teachers. Students chose a grade-appropriate book to keep so that all families would have a book to practice together at home. Teachers took turns developing and modeling literacy strategies. An interpreter assisted families to learn in their native language.

Girl Scouts and high school students entertained younger children with crafts in a childcare area. Staff members helped with food, childcare, crafts, publicity, phone calls, home visits, and transportation. The school publicized the event through bilingual fliers, newsletters, the *Como News*, and phone calls. A brief description of Family Literacy Nights was posted on the school's web site in Spanish. Even the Cat in the Hat heralded the activity as he visited classrooms encouraging students to attend.

Family Literacy Nights cost \$2,431 to implement. The school funded this with a

Reading Excellence Act (REA) grant that was designed to help increase reading scores. Girl Scout support proved instrumental as well.

Teachers dedicated extra time and effort to ensure that Family Literacy Nights achieved positive results for their students. By partnering together, teachers and parents helped students improve their reading skills and behavior. Since implementing Family Literacy Nights, ESL students read and comprehend better. Attendance is up to 98%, and families are even more eager to work with teachers and staff.

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