

## Science Mystery Night

---

*Southside Elementary School  
Buffalo, New York*

Students at Southside Elementary School played the roles of scientists and detectives at Science Mystery Night. Students ran tests, collected data, asked questions, and formed conclusions to discover “Who Borrowed Mr. Bear?” or to solve “The Case of the Missing Millionaire.” Teams of students and their parents used critical thinking, lab skills, and science knowledge in an interactive and fun way to solve the mysteries.

Invitations to Science Mystery Night were sent to every member of the student body. Faculty spent two weeks gathering the necessary materials for the mysteries, one for older students and one for younger students. “Who Borrowed Mr. Bear?” targeted students in second through fourth grades. The solution was fairly obvious once the students looked at the entire test results. In “The Case of the Missing Millionaire,” students in fifth through eighth grades discussed evidence pointing to each of the four suspects. Since forensic evidence did not provide a clear-cut answer, each team needed to justify any claim using hard evidence. Eighth grade students ran the lab experiments, under the direction and supervision of the science faculty.

Science Mystery Night gave parents an opportunity to witness the positive effects of inquiry-based instruction. Students practiced their lab safety techniques and used critical thinking skills. They also improved their speaking skills by presenting evidence to the large group. Evaluations given at the end of the night proved to be very positive. Next year, Southside Elementary School will consider splitting the mystery nights into two different

evenings so that more time can be devoted to discussing the evidence. They will also think about developing math, language arts, and social studies-based mystery nights.

*Susan Wade, ATP Member  
(716) 828-4818*