

Literacy Sight Word Competition

*Harvey Rice Elementary School
Cleveland, Ohio*

In an effort to improve reading achievement, Harvey Rice Elementary School developed a literacy contest that recognized the accomplishments of students along with the support of their families.

Just before winter vacation, the administration gave each student in third and fourth grade a list of sight words identified by the Reading First Grant. Students, parents, staff, and administrators signed contracts stating that students would receive practice and support at home, after school, and during lunch in order to learn all 100 words. The office staff placed phone calls to families to explain the contract and the guidelines and timeline for the competition. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) used letters, parent conferences, and newsletters to inform parents about the competition.

In addition to studying at home, students could receive tutoring at school during lunch and at the end of the day. Utilizing foster grandparents, corporate partners, and community resources, the school partnered with volunteers to help students master the list of words. Teachers tested the students two weeks after returning from winter break.

After evaluating the results of the sight word test, the ATP planned the awards assembly, including a program with the names of all the students with perfect scores. Parents received a newsletter inviting them to attend the recognition event. After the Harvey Rice choir performed, students with scores of 90% or higher received a certificate. Fifty-six students with perfect scores and their family members

were called to the stage. The principal placed a medallion around each student's neck and then gave the student a medallion to place around his/her family member's neck. All recipients stayed on stage for a standing ovation and a group picture. The school posted the picture and the names of all the students with perfect scores on a bulletin board.

Students and parents both expressed an overwhelmingly positive response to the Literacy Sight Word Competition. Many students wore their medallions to school for weeks after the assembly. Parents appreciated that they received recognition for helping their children, and many went right back to work after the assembly to show off their medallions to their coworkers.

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