

Partners in Reading Success Video/CD

*Hawthorn Hills Elementary School
Wausau, Wisconsin*

Lights! Camera! Action! The Hawthorn Hills Site Council took creative action to help inform parents about the importance of reading and the best ways to encourage their children to pick up a book at home.

Knowing that reading at home positively impacts in-school performance, the Hawthorn Hills Site Council of parents, teachers, a community member, and the principal brainstormed ways to get the message out to all parents. The Site Council decided on a parent-friendly video with ideas and helpful hints for pre-readers and more experienced readers. Each family received a video or CD at parent-teacher conferences.

After receiving \$17,000 in grant money from the local chapter of Altrusa International and the Kiwanis Club of Greater Wausau, the Site Council hired a local production company. Working closely with the district's public relations department, the production began with interviews, information gathering, and a first draft of a script. Teachers, district literacy trainers, and parents all gave input into the proof-reading and revisions.

Local families and teachers, chosen to represent the diversity of the city's population, starred in the video. Filming took place during the summer months at the homes of the families and several public locations, including Hawthorn Hills.

Parent groups and teachers previewed a rough cut of the video and contributed their comments and ideas. One suggestion the Site Council implemented was including a booklet

of helpful tips with each video. The booklet, divided into sections for younger and older readers, offered suggestions for open-ended questions and conversation starters for parents. The tips were written in Hmong and Spanish, as well as English. "The parents seemed very appreciative of receiving the video and accompanying brochure. They thought the suggestions for open-ended questions and discussion prompts would be very helpful," commented a teacher.

While originally intended for the families of Hawthorn Hills students, the video will be produced for each family in the Wausau School District through extra grant money the district provided. In addition, the video was translated into Hmong and Spanish for families who speak English as a second language, and will be distributed at special evening presentations at each school. In the future, the video will continue to be shared with new families at Hawthorn Hills.

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