

# Opening Windows to Writing

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*Ranch View Elementary School  
Naperville, Illinois*

The students became teachers—for a night—at Ranch View Elementary School. And their parents became the students as they spent an evening getting acquainted with how the youngsters learn to write. Through a PowerPoint presentation starring its students and teachers, the school conducted “Opening Windows to Writing,” a session on the Six Traits Writing Process.

“We are a learning community with a common understanding and vision for writing,” said the event’s planners. Showing parents that vision and letting them know how they can support writing instruction at home was one of the school improvement goals.

Opening Windows was created as part of Back to School Curriculum Night—an event that normally draws 80 to 90 percent of the school’s parents. The School/Family/Community Partnership (SFCP) team decided to capitalize on this terrific turnout by explaining the writing curriculum. That decision proved a good one; more than 400 parents and 50 faculty and staff members took part in the session.

Teacher leaders—one for grades K-2 and one for grades 3-5—designed and delivered the PowerPoint presentation and accompanying handouts. The teachers videotaped students from each grade so parents heard the students, in their own voices, describing the Six Traits and how they use them while learning to write.

One parent happily learned that she was already on the right track: “It made me realize I was doing the right thing by encouraging story writing, even at this age.”

The SFCP team designed the Opening Windows presentation after hosting a similar—and very successful—program on the school’s reading curriculum. The district curriculum department paid the teachers for two hours of planning time to develop the PowerPoint presentation. The team publicized the event in the Curriculum Night brochure, advertising that students played a major part in the presentation—a definite draw.

“Terrific” parent involvement made the event especially successful, and parent members of the SFCP team used the night to recruit new members. “It brought new interest in becoming part of our team,” said one member.

Overall, the SFCP team considered the event well worth the effort. “The end product is a parent population with a good understanding of what we are doing in the classroom.”

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