

Literacy Night with Dr. Seuss

*Hill Field Elementary School
Clearfield, Utah*

Even with 95 percent of its students living in military families and half of its students moving in and out each year, Hill Field Elementary was able to attract someone for its literacy night that everyone recognized—Dr. Seuss! The school’s principal dressed up as the popular children’s author, accompanied by some of his favorite friends, the Cat in the Hat, the Grinch, and Thing One and Thing Two, for a celebration of literacy and Dr. Seuss’s birthday.

And what a celebration it was, with more than 300 people attending. “It was a hugely successful event and exceeded my expectations,” said one teacher, who is a member of the literacy council. The event ended with everyone eating cake and punch and singing “Happy Birthday” to Dr. S. All of the children took home goodie bags of books and others things to read.

Because its student body is in constant flux, the Hill Field staff decided to involve parents in as many activities as possible to add some stability to the children’s education. Located near Hill Field Air Force Base, the school was among the first to receive training for its involvement effort through the Military Child Initiative (MCI), an NNPS program designed to promote family involvement in schools with a large number of military families.

By holding a literacy night, Hill Field hoped to educate parents about the components of literacy: independent reading, reading aloud, fluency, and comprehension. Testing in the school indicated that students needed to improve in all of these skill areas.

Students arrived in their pajamas with their families. They visited stations where they read books, made crafts related to fairy tales and Dr. Seuss stories, and attended readers’ theaters, where older students dramatically read stories out loud. Literacy Night exposed students to the fun of reading. Parents learned how to help their children at home and how to access materials to learn even more.

Three of the school’s reading teachers coordinated the event, working with the PTA, the Joint Staff School Committee, and the Community Council. Older students prepared the readers’ theaters and decorated banners highlighting their favorite books—many of them by Dr. Seuss.

Grant money from NNPS and Title I covered the \$400 cost. Staff from the nearby base and the PTA worked at the event. This added help came in handy when the crowd far exceeded the number expected.

Next year, the school plans to hold events in classrooms throughout the building rather than concentrating them in the gym. This will allow the crowds to spread out. They also hope to celebrate literacy throughout March and set reading goals, with incentives, for the month.

In addition to increasing literacy awareness, the night gave families who often do not get the opportunity to meet one another a chance to get acquainted and to bond with the school and its staff.

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