

Reading Extended Days and Nights

*Rolling Terrace Elementary School
Takoma Park, Maryland*

Rolling Terrace Elementary has always strived to bring its diverse population of about 700 students together. The Reading Committee was looking for ideas to promote family involvement, especially among parents who are not native English speakers, as well as improve overall student achievement. Ultimately, the committee developed two programs to meet these goals.

The first program, Reading Extended Day, was held after school on Tuesdays for 10 weeks. Implemented to help students improve their reading skills, this program was open to everyone, although teachers identified at-risk students and encouraged their attendance. The reading specialist helped select a program that was suited for the target population and would improve the comprehension skills of children reading below grade level. Recruiting teachers to work in the program and finding compensation for them presented a challenge, but Title I funds were eventually used for this intervention, which cost about \$2,500.

The second program was Reading Nights, designed to teach parents activities that they could do with their children at home to promote a love of reading. Teachers at each grade level determined the areas in which children needed more practice at home. Some teachers demonstrated how to read aloud and talk about books; some demonstrated how to select books at appropriate reading levels; others showed parents how to help their children figure out vocabulary words using context. Materials used in the sessions were sent home,

so parents and children could practice the skill taught.

To attract participants—always a challenge—the school advertised frequently. Community members helped with translations. PTA and Title I funds helped to support these evening programs.

Students benefited academically because both programs reinforced what students were learning in school. Parents learned new reading strategies to use at home. Teachers had additional time to work with students and gained the support of parents. One parent was heard to say, “I wish we had more reading nights, I love the activity and can’t wait to do it with my daughter at home. I had no idea how important knowing my child’s reading level was. I learned a lot from this!” The Reading Committee intends to continue these practices next year, and is considering coordinating the Reading Nights with the school’s book fair.

*Haydee Puertas, Program Coordinator
(301) 431-7600
haydee_m_puertas@mcpsmd.org*