

Meadow Glens Reads

*Meadow Glens Elementary
Naperville, Illinois*

Families that read together learn together! In the fast-paced society in which we live, slowing down to enjoy a book seems to be getting more and more difficult for many families. Meadow Glens Elementary's reading initiative brought children closer to their parents, allowed families to interact with other families, strengthened the home-school connection and involved the larger community in celebrating literacy.

Meadow Glens' School, Family, Community Partnerships (SFCP) team developed Meadow Glens Reads based on its community's reading program, "Naperville Reads." During a regular SFCP meeting, the team identified four goals:

- Educate parents about reading strategies;
- Encourage family members to read together and learn from each other;
- Connect reading to enjoyment and life-long learning; and
- Build school-community connections through literature.

The month-long event kicked off at the school's Open House. SFCP leaders introduced the school's 2006-07 theme, "Expand Your World." Families visited a booth with additional information about Meadow Glens Reads and signed up to participate. Parents received a list of appropriate books supporting the theme, which was compiled by a local bookshop. The school's Learning Resource Center (LRC) director previewed some of the multicultural books with each class to generate students' excitement about the activity.

During Meadow Glens Reads, participating families read a book from the designated booklist. Afterwards, they created a "book jacket," made from pizza boxes that SFCP members gave each family. The jackets highlighted the culture depicted in the book.

Meadow Glens Reads culminated with teachers, families, students and community members celebrating at a multicultural extravaganza! This event included dinner, a storyteller, teacher-led book discussions, and an interactive computer-based scavenger hunt. And of course, families displayed their pizza box book jackets.

Many stakeholders helped make the reading initiative a success and held the school's cost to \$375. Community members compiled the booklist, offered books at a discount during Open House, provided pizza and salad for the celebration and donated raffle prizes that were awarded during the evening.

More than 150 students, 160 parents and 12 community members participated. Students benefited from reading with their families and learning about other cultures. Parents became knowledgeable about the process of analyzing and discussing a story. Many will be better able to help their children talk about the stories they read in the future. The event also provided an opportunity for teachers to interact with families outside of the formal classroom setting.

Because the practice is an annual event, the SFCP relies on participant feedback from surveys to plan for the next year. Parents' responses this year were overwhelmingly positive: "This was the best, very well organized. Please do it again next year!" That parent's wish to again participate in Meadow Glens Reads will come true as the school already received a grant for next year's event.

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