

Parent-Child Book Club

*Ranch View School
Naperville, Illinois*

The parent-child book club is a great example of an activity adapted from another school's Promising Partnership Practice. Ranch View School built on a practice developed elsewhere to meet two needs – addressing students' social and emotional issues and improving reading fluency.

A survey at Ranch View indicated that students faced difficult developmental issues that should be addressed at school and at home. Good children's literature assists students in learning ways to handle problems and situations. The book club guided children in grades 2-5 and their parents in discussions of books and how they related to their own lives. Also, one school goal is to improve reading fluency. Research suggests that one way to do this is for children to read regularly outside of school. The book club involved parents in meeting this goal.

The books selected for the book club portrayed children dealing with bullying, divorce, friendship, intolerance and physical disabilities. Having a parent and child explore these issues in the context of a book club increased the chance they would talk together about how the child might approach these issues in his or her own life. Parents had the opportunity to influence their children's ideas and decisions on how to deal with these common life challenges.

The school had about 290 participants this year, including fathers, mothers, grandparents and children. For each meeting, children and their adult partners were asked to choose one book from a list of three or four to read together at home during a three-week period. Then, they met at the school, in a library meeting room or at a local restaurant to discuss the book. The school provided discussion guides for all participants. Students received a kick-off question on an index card on which they could write their answers. This helped the quieter students join the discussions.

A staff member or parent acted as a

facilitator for each discussion. In keeping with the relaxed setting, the school served healthy snacks and drinks. At the end of the one-hour book club meeting, parents and children were given a survey to complete. It asked them to rate various facets of the activity, including the book, the discussion and the location, and to offer suggestions for future book clubs.

Teachers, administrators and the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) assisted by facilitating the discussions and by choosing the target books. Students and families received information on each book, including topic, reading level and number of pages. Teachers conducted book talks to acquaint students with the books. The children were responsible for taking the information home and working with their parents to decide whether to participate and what book to read.

A local bookstore provided invaluable support in choosing the books and making sure they were available if the parents wished to buy them. The school library also carried multiple copies of several of the books.

The cost of implementing the practice was \$350, which included purchasing 45 books for one of the book club meetings. A grant from the Home and School Association covered these costs. The School/Family/Community Partners (SFCP) provided the snacks.

The event was successful in many ways. It increased the amount of time that parents and children spent together in a quality activity. Parents reported that the practice allowed them to see their child in a different light – as reading partners. Enthusiasm for reading at home increased and so did students' level of comprehension and fluency.

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