

## Dr. Seuss on the Loose Family Reading Night

Oconto Elementary School  
Oconto, Wisconsin

Dr. Seuss celebrated his birthday in style last March with the help of students from Oconto Elementary School. In honor of his 104th year, 90 students and 120 parents turned out for Dr. Seuss on the Loose Family Reading and Fun Night, perhaps the biggest reading event their small Wisconsin town had ever seen.

*The Cat in the Hat* was there, of course. As were guest readers, including the principal, the librarian, and parents. When participants got hungry, they could go to the *Green Eggs and Ham* Snack Shack and work off the calories at the *Fox in Socks* sock-hop with music by a local DJ. Many other activities, such as a book walk, craft tables, and displays of student-published books, kept the revelers busy.

While the youngsters busied themselves at the activity tables, members of the Action Team for Partnership (ATP) talked with parents about strategies for getting their children to read. The students each received a book, donated by the PTO, and a book mark they made, courtesy of a local stamp business.

“We felt that by offering a family friendly activity that was fun, it would bring the parents to schools and. . . show them the value of reading with their kids at home,” said the school’s family involvement coordinator.

The ATP got the project started by forming a Focus on Reading Team, which asked the local PTO to sponsor the reading night. Together, parents, teachers, and local library staff brainstormed ways to attract Oconto families.

With a little Internet research and some careful studying of NNPS’s *Promising Partnership Practices* book, inspiration struck—Dr. Seuss was the answer.

The biggest challenge for the group was getting enough volunteers to support the event. Many responded to a flier sent home with children a few weeks before the event. Still others contacted the event’s organizers via

e-mail to offer their time. The ATP signed up volunteers for 45-minute slots to ensure that everyone was able to spend at least half the evening enjoying the activities with their own children.

The school’s teachers and administrators considered the event a success. The principal was impressed by the turnout. Many teachers were thrilled about the donated books. The program had another positive effect: it gave parents and community members the opportunity to meet socially.

Administrators at Oconto already have another family reading night in the works for next year, though the theme may change. Will it be zoo themed, have a haunted house motif, or perhaps feature creatures from under the sea? No one yet knows. But if there’s one thing everyone does know, it’s that these elementary students and their families will be anxious to attend.

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