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An Educational Night Out

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An Educational Night Out

Abstract

When educators, families, and communities work together, schools get better. As a result, students get the high quality education that they need to lead productive lives. Thirty years of research confirms that family development is a powerful influence on children's achievement in school (Eagle, 1989; Henderson & Berla, 1994; U.S. Department of Education; Ziegler, 1987). When families are involved in their children's education, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates and are more likely to enroll in higher education than students with less involved families. It is for these reasons that increasing the family's involvement in the education of children is an important goal for schools.

An Educational Night Out

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Art in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By

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Introduction

When educators, families, and communities work together, schools get better. As a result, students get the high quality education that they need to lead productive lives. Thirty years of research confirms that family development is a powerful influence on children's achievement in school (Eagle, 1989; Henderson & Berla, 1994; U.S. Department of Education; Ziegler, 1987). When families are involved in their children's education, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates and are more likely to enroll in higher education than students with less involved families. It is for these reasons that increasing the family's involvement in the education of children is an important goal for schools.

Description of the Project

There are many ways that schools can convey to parents that their involvement is important. The "Educational Event Night" at Northeast Elementary in Ankeny, Iowa will serve as a way to further incorporate a highly involved group of parents into the education of their children. The task for this Educational Event Night will be to design a family involvement program that informs and involves the parents in literacy development for children in the grades kindergarten through grade two.

Rationale

Parents at Northeast Elementary are always searching for ways to be further involved in their child's education. The teachers at the school are in

search of ways to further involve the parents as teachers. This project, An Educational Night, will allow parents and teachers to work more closely for the best education of the children by providing time outside of the school day to practice literacy skills. The project also allows teachers to model effective methods of teaching for parents who may be enthusiastic about supporting student learning but do not have the training or intuitive knowledge required for successful home instruction.

Purpose

The purpose of this Educational Event Night is to constructively involve parents in their children's learning process. The event will provide them specific ideas, methods and time for reading as they continue to assist their children in literacy acquisition. The goal of this project is to help parents and children look forward to visiting the school for ideas and guidance on how to increase literacy skills at home. When parents become interested in supporting their child's literacy learning, they in turn experience successes in their own development (Biggam, 2003). The parents in this program will form bonds with fellow parents, their own child and other students. These bonds will provide a support system for all members of the new learning community which is vital for the success of the project. Parental ownership of the program will allow it to grow and thrive in each family home.

The scheduled time together created by the Educational Event Night is a perfect opportunity to model skills that can be used at home. Parents and children will begin to develop a learning partnership that can be helpful

throughout the child's educational career. It is during this time that students will be able to see a rich and diverse room of life long learners. The parents, teachers, community members and other people who are in attendance to the program will serve as role models to successful futures for the students.

Modeling and providing effective teaching strategies for parents increases their comfort with providing literacy learning experiences at home. In some cases, parents are willing to work with their children but are uncertain of the best practices for doing so. These Educational Event Nights will dispel some of the myths that teaching should occur in the formal setting of the school day only.

Importance of Project

The importance of the project lies in schools developing successful partnerships with parents. These schools view student achievement as a shared responsibility, and all stakeholders including the parents, administrators, teachers, and community learners play important roles in the learning. The No Child Left Behind Act makes this more important than it has ever been before. Parents are recognized as the first, and life long teachers of their children. Section 1118 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 contains parental involvement requirements for school districts that receive Title I funds. The aim of this section of the law is to ensure that parents are involved in their child's education, which in turn will increase student academic achievement and school performance.

Terminology

Skilled Parents - members of the parent group or community who have the skills to train other parents.

Surveys – Questionnaires will be provided in advance to elicit information to include, add, and leave out of the Educational Event Night.

Two-way Communication – Effective communication between families and schools by reducing education jargon and breaking down cultural/language.

Phonemic Awareness – the ability to recognize that words are made up of phonemes and how to manipulate those sounds (Cunningham, 2000).

The Fast Start Program – a decoding and fluency strategy

READ-A-ROUND Program - another fluency strategy using repetitive readings along with parental involvement for proper modeling of reading.

Pause, Prompt, and Praise – a positive reinforcement reading strategy

Literature Review

Various research provide the necessary theoretical support for family involvement through the use of evening educational events. My project is based on and derived from studies on evening educational events. The following review of the existing literature on family involvement in children's literacy development will discuss three topics: importance of family involvement, effectiveness of family literacy programs, and educational event nights as an effective family literacy program.

Importance of Family Involvement

Research clearly supports that family involvement has a positive impact on school achievement (Schickedanz, 1981; Snow & Garfield, 1983; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). The more parents read to their children and engage them in authentic literacy experiences (e.g. shopping lists and thank you notes), the more likely children are to become literate (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Children who are more fluent and positive about reading usually come from parent-child pairs who view reading as fun, keep stories moving, and encourage questions and humor while reading (Lancy & Bergin, 1992). Strong evidence also supports a positive relationship between parent involvement in education and student academic achievement, attitudes, and aspirations (Tizard, Schoefield, & Helison: 1982; Becker, 1984.)

A wide array of studies by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, a division of the U.S. Department of Education (1997), have shown that family involvement leads to higher grades, better attendance, increased motivation regardless of ethnic background, socioeconomic status, or parents level of education. It is for this reason that the family involvement such as an evening program at the school will add to the above successes while involving parents in their children's education.

Padak, Sapin, and Baycich (2002) state that the common goal of family literacy programs across the United States is to strengthen intergenerational literacy and help parents or caregivers learn that they are their children's first teachers and that they can be successful in this role. Children are at home for a

longer period of time than they are at school, even during the school year. According to Timothy Rasinski (2003), if parents could find just 20 minutes per day, Monday through Friday, and 60 minutes on Saturday and Sunday to work with their children, they could conceivably increase the amount of literacy instruction and support their children receive by nearly 50%. This instruction is more likely to be personal, one-to-one instruction that is not typical to school instruction. If parents could only divert an additional 10 minutes a day to work with their children it would still be likely to have a huge impact on their children's reading success (Rasinski, 2003).

When parents are made aware that they can make this large of an impact on their children's literacy development, when they are provided sufficient professional support and encouragement, and when they feel that a true and mutual partnership between the school and home exist, they will be more likely to get involved and stay involved throughout their child's years in school. It is necessary to provide parents with appropriate content and instructional work that can be implemented with their children at home. The content and the activities need to be effective, engaging, authentic, brief, and easy to implement.

Family literacy programs are about opportunity, support, and hope (Neuman, Caperrelli, Kee, 1998). Learning to read opens the door for a lifetime of learning that provides hope and opportunity for the future; it is for this reason that teachers and parents search for ways to increase literacy learning and development. It has become difficult for teachers to help struggling students to

develop reading skills. Reading appears to be low on the list of activities children choose to do in their spare time (Palmer, Codling, 1994).

Instruction in reading strategies and skills is essential. Ample time must be provided for students to enjoy good books and have positive reading experiences. Educational activities in conjunction with parents and adults in the community will help provide even more time for reading practice and enjoyment. Leading educators (Allington, 1977; Anderson, et al., 1985; McCracken & McCracken, 1979; Routman, 1991; Trelease, 1989) have suggested four methods that are particularly effective in inviting hesitant readers into the world of books. These include: allowing time for silent reading, offering a choice of reading materials, sharing of literature read with and by children, and providing appropriate adult modeling of reading. This list is simple, inexpensive and can be used to help develop student's desire to read. It is often found that parents are searching for time to read with their children. This struggle in the busy life of parents makes it easy for non-motivated students to not read.

Effectiveness of Family Literacy Programs

A variety of family literacy programs are being used within schools across the Nation. The goals of each program are slightly different while the majority of the events carry the same underlying premise to involve parents in children's educational development because various research reports that parent involvement makes a huge difference.

The effectiveness of family literacy programs is cited in "Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children" (Snow et al., 1998). The research

confirms the positive effects of family literacy activities on children with the following statements:

- Family literacy activities have a positive effect on school achievement (Schickedanz, 1981; (Snow & Garfield, 1983); Teale & Sulzby, 1986).
- Children who are more fluent and positive about reading come from parent-child pairs who viewed reading as fun, keep stories moving, with a “semantic” rather than a strict “decoding” orientation, and encourage questions and humor while reading (Lancy & Bergin, 1992).
- Parents who believe that reading is a source of entertainment have children with a more positive view about reading than do parents who emphasize the skills aspect of reading development (Baker et al., 1997).
- Family storybook reading promotes positive feelings about books and literacy (Taylor & Strickland, 1986).

Susan Brand (1996) developed a parent partnership program titled, **PITCH**. This acronym stands for **P**roject **I**nterconnecting **T**eachers, **C**hildren and **H**omes. This program offered literacy in-service workshops that were aimed at helping elementary and preschool teachers and administrators improve home-school relationships. This project emphasized developing and expanding classroom programs that promote literacy development. The workshop participants were encouraged to develop home surveys, checklists, goal setting exercises that provide teachers with data from parents to develop parental involvement programs that are relevant to the school and community. The PITCH workshop taught teachers that they need to take the initiative to show

parents that their input and collaborative relationship really do matter. The PITCH program was premised on the notion that effective parent involvement programs should “enable parents to do their job well...and should promote shared responsibility between parents and professionals” (Brand, 1996). This program was very influential for teachers because training, research and materials are rarely provided by school districts and education programs to design and plan parent involvement programs (Brand, 1996).

This project resulted in one teacher’s instance, in a Spanish/English survey sent home to parents of her students. Through this survey she discovered that classroom parents would enjoy an ethnic food potluck dinner. This dinner served as a time that the teacher parents watched their students on videotape throughout the school day while enjoying the camaraderie at the school setting. This program had a 98% turnout which was a record showing for the school.

Teachers who attended this program learned how to provide parents with the support, skills, and knowledge to help their children achieve. Another teacher commented that she learned how to find the parent’s area of strength rather than imposing her own ideas. This was also very inquisitive to make the parents feel as if ideas are not being “pushed” on to them. Parents are teachers. Educators need to remember to use them to their fullest potential.

Educational Event Night as a Family Literacy Program

Research shows that an Educational Event Night is one of effective family literacy programs. A study conducted by Laurie Corso, Sue Funk, and Janet

Gaffney (2002). An Educational Evening program that they developed at their school was presented. Parents were constantly asking them what they could do to help their children with difficult literacy tasks and how they could be supportive in the development of their children's reading. This program served as an effective way to bring teachers, parents, and children together to stimulate attitudes in the area of literacy. The teachers provided parents with ways that they could support their children on the path to literacy. This time together provided a motivating experience for children while serving as an experience that enhanced literacy attitudes while also serving as a model for parents who are learning to teach literacy skills to their children. In turn, parent's attitudes about literacy were enhanced. There is increasing evidence that parental beliefs and attitudes regarding literacy and reading, in particular, influence children's literacy development (DeGaryshe, 1995; Baaker et al., 1995; Spiegel, 1994).

The Educational Evening planned by Corso, Funk, and Gaffney helped students and parents to take a larger role in their reading development. Students and parents that participated were more accountable for at home reading, were excited to share at school about reading and books that were read at home, and parents to made book requests based on the observations of the reading that was occurring with their child at home. This program also celebrated things that families were doing at home already to help their children become better readers and writers through the use of surveys and discussions at the evening out programs.

Corso, Funk, and Gaffney's study on *An Educational Evening Out* had many great ideas that will be used in the project. The use of surveys and parent discussions about how they are helping their child at home already to become better readers and writers will be integrated. Parents will be acknowledged for their good ideas and involvement at home. The idea for the use of the Pause, Prompt, and Praise program will be also adapted used within the development of a new literacy event.

Nancy Fox, (2003) developed A Family Reading Celebration as an event that parents and children attend in the evening together. It is designed to stimulate interests in reading, creative writing, and the imagination. This "Celebration" provided students in Colorado an enjoyable and motivating experience with their parents who are developing skills in teaching their children to read. Fox stated that reading programs or reading celebrations outside of the school day provides a setting that feels safe for a child who is experiencing difficulties and has a low motivation for reading. Such a child likely faces the three main stumbling blocks that are known to throw children off course as they are learning to read (Snow, 1996) that include:

1. Attitude and expectations for success.
2. Difficulty in understanding and using the alphabetic principal.
3. Failure to acquire and use comprehension skills and strategies.

The child desperately needs to observe talented adults and other children enjoying reading. Educational Event Night provides an opportunity for them to become engaged in the fun of reading and other interesting literacy experiences.

Fox, 2003, stated the first stumbling block of attitude and success expectations is targeted by the development of family reading celebrations. This program works to reduce negative attitudes that are developed over time that stifle the learner's motivation and hampers instructional efforts. This program uses props and costumes, free autographed books, meetings with real book authors, poets, actors, and storytellers who specialize in literacy activities.

Evening reading programs will help ensure reading time outside of the school day and bring in the parent component of this process to increase reading motivation and reading as a choice activity. It is essential for teachers and parents to get involved in the early literacy acquisition years to increase reading for enjoyment.

Fox's study on Family Reading Celebrations describes an evening project in which students and adults are provided the opportunity to get excited about reading through the Pajama theme and using of props. This research reiterated the importance of advertising the evening program through the use of school newsletters for communication. The Educational Event Night will use the Pajama Theme to add excitement and entertainment for the evening.

Based on the above research and the needs of the school and community of Ankeny, an evening literacy program could be very beneficial. It will work to strengthen the school-family partnership and provide professional development and training for school staff and parents. With the involvement of skilled parents, the school will be able to help children develop literacy more efficiently and establish life long reading habits

The Project

The Educational Event Night will have three major dimensions: tips for emergent readers, time for adults and students to participate in literacy activities, and development of phonemic awareness. These three dimensions are important aspects of literacy development. Each dimension will include specific real world approaches that parents can use at home after the Event Nights are over.

Dimensions of the Educational Event Night

The first dimension of the program, tips for reading with emergent readers, will include the Fast Start Program (Paduk and Raskinski, 1995). In the second dimension, there will be time for adults and children to participate in literacy activities which will include the Read-A-Round activity along with the teaching of the Praise and Prompt procedure. Lastly, phonemic awareness will be a focus through the use of nursery rhymes, and word work.

- Tips for reading with emergent readers
 - Fast Start Program (Paduk and Raskinski, 1995)
- Time for adults and children to participate in literacy activities.
 - Read-A-Round
 - Praise and Prompt
- Development of Phonemic awareness
 - Nursery Rhymes
 - Word Work

Parents will be taught how to use the Fast Start program that was developed by Nancy Padak and Timothy Rasinski. The parent child teams will also receive time to watch this strategy modeled and also practice using this strategy with their child. This helps parents of primary grade children (emergent readers) develop competence in decoding and gives them the kind of repeated reading practice that contributes to reading fluency. The way the strategy works is the children take home a short typed passage in a large font. This occurs daily. The reading is usually a rhyme, poem, or other passage that is no more than a hundred words long. The text should be somewhat predictable. Every evening, parents and children are asked to work together for about 15 minutes on the Fast Start reading passage. Sitting side by side, the parent first reads the passage to the child, pointing to the words in the text as it is read. The parent is encouraged to read the passage to the child two, three, or four times and chat about it with the child. Next, parents and children read the passage together. At first, the parent leads the child in the reading, but as the child develops confidence in his or her reading, the parent's voice diminishes. Eventually, after several read-together experiences, the child is invited to read the passage to the parent who then praises the child for the good work.

A program that shares similar ideas as the Fast Start program has been devised at Northeast Elementary School by another first grade teacher, Joy Ford. It is called READ-A-ROUND. This Read-A-Round program will take place at each Educational Event. Where the Fast Start program will be a program that

skills observed through modeled reading to read to the new adult listener. The child will read the story to 3 different adults, 1 time each. Each reading will provide the student with a more fluent and smooth oral presentation of the story. This Read-A-Round activity will continue for the remainder of the Educational Event Night because it is set for the end of the evening for the best time management. Students can participate in reading as many read-a-round books and readings as there is time for them.

The Pause, Prompt, and Praise procedure works well in teaching parents how to increase their use of praise, delay parent attention to errors in reading by pausing, and it provides prompts for parents to use rather than telling the child the word. The first step is to **Pause**. Parents will be instructed in how to use the pause strategy. When a child comes to a tricky word, wait to give the child a chance to solve it before moving to the next step in the procedure that is entitled **Prompt**. Parents will be instructed in a whole group setting using a child model for this procedure. When the child pauses and cannot continue, it is the parent's responsibility to say

"What can you do? These are hints to give the students:

- Look at the picture.
- Check the first letter.
- Think about the story

There are cards and a quick guide that parents will receive in the packet upon check-in that will guide them through this process. The last step in this procedure is giving **Praise**. It is very important for a child to receive praise when

the child reads a sentence correctly. Make sure to praise the child when the child corrects himself or herself after a mistake. A good example would include: "You knew that word didn't say ____" or "You knew that word didn't make sense."

The child will benefit in development of learned reading strategies while also developing confidence in reading and receiving much needed praise.

Posters will be placed in the media center in addition to the handouts that are included in the appendices for parents to take home.

The strategy will be taught through modeling using a reader and a teacher that will present the use of the procedure. This shows parents what it will "look like" as they use it with their own child (ren).

The phonemic awareness activities included in the Educational Event Night include the use of Nursery Rhymes and Word Work. Phonemic awareness and phonics are much talked about subjects. Holloway (1999) states that children whose family members read to them three or more times a week were more likely to know their letters than were children whose family member read to them less frequently. For most children, phonemic awareness is developed through this reading time and opportunity to play with language. Nursery rhymes are a great way that parents can work on these skills with their young learner. Clothes pin phonics and compound word work are two self made activities that will increase children's opportunity to "play" with language and further develop literacy skills. This will help the students acquire a sight vocabulary and take further steps toward understanding how sounds and symbols work in reading according to Timothy Rasinski (2003). The Make and

Take activity that will be provided in the first session is one that deals directly with 3 to 4 letter words on cards in which students are required to use 5 clothes pins that are marked with the vowels. This is an excellent form of phonics practice due to the opportunity that is provided to play with language according to Raskinski, 2003. This activity will allow children to make non-sense words in addition to real words. The clothes pins and word cards make for an interactive activity though using manipulatives. This activity will include 5 clothes pins, a black fine tip marker, a plastic baggie, and the word cards printed on card stock. The student's job will be to cut out the cards on the lines and the parent will write each vowel on the flat clip part of the clothes pin. This baggie of word cards and clothes pins are the child's to take home and use at the end of the evening. There will be an activity sheet provided for the student and parent to begin participating in the activity at the completion of the cutting apart of the strips. The student will attach the clothes pins one at a time to the provided cards. The student will then use various reading strategies to decide if the word is a real word or a non-sense word. If the word is "real" the student will copy the work onto the sheet in the appropriate vowel column.

The second Make and Take activity is a poetry activity. Parents can easily put together collections of nursery rhymes that with 15 minutes of use per day will dramatically increase the level of print concept and knowledge (Rasinski, 2003). Timothy Rasinski states that nursery rhymes are public domain material, so anyone can copy them without violating copyright law. The students will be asked to read through the packet of nursery rhymes with their parent(s). This

packet of rhymes is to be cut into strips so that the student can put the rhyme back in the proper order. The child will be provided with the poems on laminated cardstock paper and envelopes for each poem to keep the cut pieces in.

Students who find this task easy can work with their parent to cut the poem into individual word cards to put the poem back together. The parent will also receive a set of poems that are not to be cut to have as a master that the child can refer to for help in the proper order of the poem.

The last Make and Take activity deals with compound words and will require the student to first read the matched compound words with their parent(s). Each student-parent team will be provided with a laminated sheet of cardstock. Then the student needs to cut the words into strips just as they had cut apart their nursery rhymes. The compound words should be cut in half and the words can be mixed up in order to begin the compound word activity. There is a corresponding worksheet provided for each child to work through this activity with the attending parent. The goal is to match up the correct compound words. This activity helps children further study words and how they work, while reminding the child that two words together make up a compound word.

Procedure of the Educational Event Night

Northeast Elementary is a K-5 building located in central Iowa, which serves 600 students in middle to upper socioeconomic status community. As in most communities, parent involvement issues are important for the success of all children. With busy schedules and financial pressures, affluent parents face

many of the same challenges as other parents in finding time for the one-to-one interactions most successful to influence academic success.

The Educational Event Night at Northeast Elementary in Ankeny, Iowa will serve as a way to further incorporate a highly involved group of parents. The task for this Educational Event Night will be to design a family involvement program that informs and involves the parents in literacy development for children in the grades kindergarten through grade two.

The parent workshop will respond to the specific needs of parents through determining how to improve the workshop after each session. Determining the interests of parents requires a broad-based needs assessment. Questionnaires will be sent directly to all parents at the beginning of the school year. This will suggest topic areas to parents and ask for recommendations of areas of interest. Informal methods are other relatively quick and easy ways that will be used to gather ideas about the interests and needs of parents.

Attendance to the program is optional for students with parental attendance required for students that attend. There will be several methods of communication to advertise the Event night. A flier will be sent home one month prior to the first meeting, teachers will be asked to include announcements about the Event Night in their weekly newsletter, the school newsletter will also contain an article on the upcoming event containing all necessary contact information, and finally, parents of students who teachers target as at risk and reluctant readers will receive personal phone calls regarding the importance of their attendance.

The group will meet the first Monday of October, January, and April from 6:00-7:15 p.m. These dates coincide with state assessment, report card, and parent teacher conference dates in order to maintain an appropriate level of awareness of literacy development. The evening will take place in the Northeast Elementary Media Center.

“Pajama Party” will be the theme of each evening. Both students and parents will be invited to come to the event in their pajamas and ready for bedtime reading. This theme not only will help students get excited about reading but will also be a time saver for parents as students will be ready for bed once they leave the event. Thus, both student and parent(s) are motivated to attend. Upon leaving the event night, parents and students will be encouraged to enjoy a bedtime story together and get right to sleep. Work weary parents can then possibly get some much needed relaxation time during a period where many report the most conflict of their day, getting ready for bed. Helping parents with this sometimes difficult time of day will further connect and develop the relationship between the teacher and the parent as a partnership.

Parents will have the opportunity to sign up for the Educational Night up to 4 days before the session. Walk-ins on the night of the event will be welcomed with open arms. The entire kindergarten, first, and second grade teaching staff will be in attendance due to the importance of the program. This will include 10 teachers in conjunction with the administrative staff.

Students and parents will arrive to the Northeast media center for check-in. The check-in will consist of a 2 person team that will provide the student/

parent team with a seating assignment, and a packet of materials for the session. The child/parent team will be seated with students of the same grade level. Seating will include specially designed pillows for the Educational Event Night. These pillows will be purchased with Parent Teacher Organization funds. They are bright colored throw pillows that student/parent teams pick up upon check-in. These groupings will be different at each Educational Event and will not be assigned for the whole year because attendance to each Event Night is optional.

This event will take place in the middle of the media center at Northeast. The large turquoise carpet will be the border for keeping the group together in groups of 75 students or fewer. The appendix map includes the room set up for the evening event. The room will be set up with the large variety of lamps. The overhead lights that students would see used during the school day will be off. There will be spot lights in addition to various table and free standing lamps used to create a changed atmosphere within the familiar media center. There will also be classical music being played in the background during the event night.

In the three Educational Event Night meetings, students and parents will participate in a variety of reading and literacy activities. These activities will include group sharing, strategy training, and practice in reading skills. All of these activities will be performed with the idea that they can be duplicated in similar form at home.

To begin the Educational Event Night, the lead teacher will guide the students in getting started with the Northeast "clap." The students know that

when this “hand clap” occurs that they are to mirror the clap and direct their attention to the teacher.

Each event night will begin in the same fashion with a literacy inventory. Within their groupings, parents will be asked to first share the things they are already doing at home to help their children become more literate. The teacher will first provide examples of simple, everyday activities that promote literacy. This will allow all parents to get new ideas and congratulate each other for the positive activities that are already taking place in their homes while getting to know each other briefly. This will occur for the initial 10 minute period of the Educational Event. The following is a schedule of events for each evening:

1st Monday in October

- A. Introductory literacy inventory discussion (10 minutes)
- B. Make and take activity – Clothes pin phonics (20 minutes)
- C. Introduce and Practice Pause, Prompt, Praise Procedure (15 minutes)
- D. Read-A-Round Activity (time remaining minus 5 minutes)
- E. Survey and Question and Answer Session (5 minutes)
- F. Bedtime Snack for students while parent(s) fill out survey - Apple

1st Monday in January

- A. Introductory literacy inventory discussion (10 minutes)
- B. Make and take activity – Poetry activity - (20 minutes)
- C. Review and Practice - Pause, Prompt, Praise Procedure (15 minutes)
- D. Read-A-Round Activity (time remaining minus 5 minutes)
- E. Survey, Question and Answer Session (5 minutes)

F. Bedtime Snack for students while parent(s) fill out survey - Banana

1st Monday in April

A. Introductory literacy inventory discussion (10 minutes)

B. Make and take activity- Compound word work - (20 minutes)

C. Practice - Pause, Prompt, Praise Procedure (15 minutes)

D. Read-a-Round Activity (time remaining minus 5 minutes)

E. Survey and Question and Answer Session (5 minutes)

F. Bedtime Snack for students while parent(s) fill out survey - Grapes

Assessment of the Educational Event

The Educational Night Out will be assessed by the parents' view of the actual program. The evaluation of this program will be done through the use of a written questionnaire. After each session, parents will be asked to fill out a short evaluation form. This form will include the following questions:

- What was the most useful?
- What was the least useful?
- What other information would you like a workshop to cover?
- What kinds of workshop experiences would you like in the future?

Assessment will also encompass an informal comparison between average grade level reading scores from the prior year without the Educational Event Night to scores once the Night is implemented. Also, the progress of students involved in the event night will be compared to the progress of non-participants of like ability level. This comparison will be made by evaluating and contrasting the

district reading scores through the use of the Ankeny School district's report card and reading template scores. Areas of comparison will be made by contrasting the scores in the areas of: fluency, guided reading level, sight words and phonemic awareness.

Conclusions and Recommendations

When educators, families, and communities work together, schools get better. In an election year, there are lots of discussions about what is best for our country. The future of our country depends on the children of our nation. Parent involvement in the education of their children makes sense regardless of which political denomination a person may be.

A result of home school relations is that students get the high quality education that they need to lead productive lives. When families are involved in their children's education, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates and are more likely to enroll in higher education than students with less involved families. It is for these reasons that the Educational Event Night was devised to increase family involvement in the education of children. Educators must continue to find more ways to incorporate parents in home /school partnership initiatives. The thirty years of research that confirms that family development is a powerful influence on children's achievement in school (Eagle, 1989; Henderson & Berla, 1994; U.S. Department of Education; Ziegler, 1987) is proof of this importance. Establishing a connection between the home and school is a must in

aiding children's reading development. Teachers must communicate to parents about the importance of family reading. The active support and engagement of all parents in their children's literacy development is more important now than ever. The new educational initiatives from the state and national level make it more necessary than ever before for teachers to fully engage parents in their child's literacy development...so that no child and no family will be left behind.

In order to get more parents involved in their children's literacy development, stronger teacher parent partnerships and an increase in parent programs are highly recommended. Teachers need to communicate regularly, clearly, and frankly with parents about the status of their child's progress, the nature of the work that is being done in the classroom, and suggestions that parents can implement to help their children (Rasinski, 2003).

It is important to continue to provide parents with activities that are based on sound theory and research that have been scientifically proved. Parents and children are in need of activities that are easy to implement while they are also short, to the point, and meaningful activities.

Before jumping into a new family involvement initiative, the school and community should decide what they want to accomplish. When parents, family members, administrators, teachers and school staff are involved as partners in education, students are more apt to find success. Every stake holder's effort becomes more vital. There are many ways that schools can convey to parents that their involvement is important. These include: newsletters, telephone information lines, parent-teacher conferences, and parent's night and/or open

house activity, to name only a few. The key to successfully implementing a family involvement program is to understand that home/school collaboration is an attitude, not just an activity, according to Cheryl G. Riggins-Newby (2003). This means that teachers and parents not only work toward a common goal, but find ways to support one another along the way.

Parental involvement can be difficult to implement. It is necessary to understand that the world in which we live is ever changing and so are the expectations of the children we teach as parents and as teachers. It is necessary that parents be enlisted for their engagement in children's literacy development. It is imperative as primary teachers to continually communicate with each other. This communication will help ensure that we persist to evaluate successful and unsuccessful experiences in addition to develop, implement, and evaluate strategies that are appropriate for the students in which we serve.

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Appendix A: Literacy Inventory

What literacy activities are you participating in
at home with your child?

Are any of these activities that you already do
or that you will try?

- Singing songs
- "Words we can Read" on the fridge or a bedroom door or wall
- Playing games
- Cooking- involves following directions and you can enjoy the end result!
- Read - Aloud
- Book making
- Literacy Games (Memory, Go Fish, etc.)
- Poetry- reading, and writing poems together and by themselves
- 5 Steps to drawing a picture:
 - 1) Think
 - 2) Draw a picture
 - 3) Write about the picture
 - 4) Name
 - 5) Date
- Syllable Work (e.g., tapping out syllabuses)
- Sharing reading through taking turns reading every other page
- "Think Link"- go through story and examine thoughts and emotions
- Shared Reading Experience
- Examining the differences between letters and words
- Letter Game - which letter is different, why? (e. g., A A A P)
- An interesting spot to read (e. g., car seat, bathtub)
- Individual/Self reading- increase increments of time from 3 minutes to 4 minutes,
- Rhyming- playing with sounds
- Guessing what is in a wrapped box- uses language skills
- Cutting pictures from magazines- could be colors, letters, or specific theme
- Shaping raw pretzels into letters, shapes, etc.
- Writing a sentence, cutting out each word, putting it back together in right order.

- "Driting;" a combination of both drawing a picture and writing about it
- Partner reading
- Sharing work or reading at home with others
- Timing reading (set amount of time) to see how much further they can read each day.
- Half/Half paper- draw on the top part and write on the bottom part
- Recording yourself reading books on a cassette tape, and then placing them in a place where your child can listen
- "Making Words"- make letters in boxes, cut apart, and make words.
- Five Finger Test- have students open a book to any page and count how many words they don't know on their fingers. If there are more than 5, then the book is too hard
- Reading a favorite book to a stuffed animal from home.
- 3 Ways to Read: 1) pretend read, 2) look at the pictures, 3) say all the words.

Appendix B: Invitational Flier

What: A Pajama Reading Party

An Educational Event Night
At NE for Parents and Students



Parents and students put on your **PAJAMAS**
and head to NE for **lots of FUN with Reading..AT NIGHT!**

Who: Students and Parents in grades Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd.

Where: NE Media Center

When: The first Monday of October, January, and April
from 6:00-7:15 p.m.

Further Information: Students are required to attend with a parent.

The evening will include parent strategies for children's reading development at home, Make and Take literacy activities for home use, and Read-A-Round activities.

Contact: Suzanne Sprecher for more information at 965-9620

Appendix C: Teacher Newsletter

Mrs. Sprecher's Weekly News

September 3, 2004

The Weekly Review

Things to ask you child about:

- WHO visited with special "Sprecher" treats?
- Chapter Book - Dork in Disguise (the author will visit our school later in the year)
- Scholastic News
- Punctuation Takes a Vacation. What was the story about?

Block Time with Mrs. Sprecher

Things to ask you child about:

- Poem, "Who Has Seen the Wind?"
- WRITING a retelling
- ISU's Miss Wauters - Coin Math
- Coin Graphs
- Coin Sorting
- Miss Mandy's first day – high school helper
- Coin combinations and tallying
- Mixed addition and subtraction games with a partner

An Educational Event Night

Mark your calendars!

Parents and students put on your PAJAMAS and head to NE for lots of FUN with Reading...AT NIGHT!

Who: K, 1, 2 grade levels with parent(s).

Where: NE Media Center

When: The first Monday of October, January, and April from 6:00-7:15 p.m.

Further Information: Students are required to attend with a parent.

The evening will include parent strategies for reading development at home, make and take literacy activities for home use, and Read-A-Round activities.

Dates to Remember

9/12-Read-A-Round -10:30

9/16 – Guest Teacher, Mrs. Berke for District wide 1st grade teacher meeting

Early Dismissal – 9/19 at 12:50

9/23 NO SCHOOL

Our Schedule

A Day

Guidance & Computers & Reading T.V. Special

B Day

Music & P.E.

C Day

Art

D Day

Music & Media

E Day

Discovery Centers & P.E.

F Day

Music & Reading Buddies

Monday is B day!

Mrs. Sprecher



Northeast

Northeast Elementary 1705 NE Vrelein Drive Ankeny, Iowa 50021

Principal, Paula Lee 963-963

Appendix D: Building Newsletter

NORTHEAST COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS:

Thank you to all Northeast parents, and staff for your communication, support, and interactions. It hardly seems possible that we are nearly to the end of a school year. Our school community will continue to change as we welcome new families and say farewell to others who are moving.

ARTISTS OF THE MONTH

In April these Northeast students were chosen by Mrs. Lamansky to have their artwork displayed in the main office for a month: Elli Leiting and Haley Matter from kindergarten; Megan Thompson, Natalie Whiting, Dakota Karthan, and Alec Loyd from first grade; Annabelle Bates and Madison Noble from second grade; Emily Lambert, Jordan Wagaman, Tanner Westberg, Connor Peck, Joel Kaufman, Alan Zhou, and Mark Stocks from fourth grade; and Madison Gingery, Emma Greaves, Jake Earp, and Michael Kever from fifth grade. Congratulations to these students!

K-12 SPRING ART SHOW

The Ankeny Schools' K-12 Spring Art Show was held April 1 - May 2 at the Ankeny Art Center, 1520 SW Ordinance Road. Mrs. Lamansky chose 16 Northeast students' pieces of artwork for the show. The following children represent our school: Katie Mason, kindergarten; Brooke Davis first grade; CoCo Strom, second grade; Claire Hanson, Samantha Coady-third grade; Jessie Johnson, Samantha Ridlen, Alyson Gloria, Paige Heagle, Chris Cox, fourth grade; Sarah Kramme, Alyssa Edwards, Haley Walsh, Willie Xie, Eric Brown, and Riley Spitzig, fifth grade. We congratulate these students. We invite the student body and their families to stop and see the exhibit at Ankeny Art Center anytime before May 4. Our young people are very talented. The show gives an excellent overview of the Ankeny Schools' K-12 art program.

IMPORTANT 2004-2005 CALENDAR DATES

Below are important dates for next year you can use these when planning trips, etc.

August 19	First Student Day	January 3	Classes Resume
September 6	Labor Day - No	February	No School
October 29	School No School,	18	No School, P/T Conf.
November 5	P/T Conf. No School	February	<i>Early Dismissal</i>
November 25	<i>Early Dismissal</i>	25 March	Spring Break
November 25/26	Thanksgiving	18 March	<i>Early Dismissal</i>
December 22	Vacation <i>Early</i>	21-25 April	No School
December 23-31	<i>Dismissal Winter</i>	28 April	Last Student Day & Early

Additional - Early Dismissal Days - 12:50 Dismissal Times		
September---3	January---19	May---13
October---20	February---17	

- NEW- NEW- NEW -
Parents and students, put on your PAJAMAS
and head to NE for lots of FUN with Reading... AT NIGHT!

Who: K, 1, 2 grade levels with parent(s).
When: The 1st Monday of October, January, and April from 6:00-7:15 p.m.

SEE YOU THIS FALL!
WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION!

Appendix E: Parent Involvement Questionnaire

Name _____ Child's Name _____

Phone Number _____ School: _____

The school staff believes that children learn most when a close partnership exists between home and school.

We would like to offer you programs or workshops on topics of interest to you.

Please fill out this survey and return it to your child's teacher.

1. Are you interested in attending an evening program for the betterment of your child's education? YES or NO

2. What is the best way that you "involve" yourself in your child's education?

3. The best time for me to attend a program is:

5:00 to 6:15 p.m. _____ 6:00 to 7:15 _____ 6:30 to 7:45 _____

4. The best day for me to attend it:

___ Monday ___ Tuesday ___ Wednesday ___ Thursday

5. I feel the need for programs on the following topics (choose 3 please):

___ Reading ___ Computers ___ Tour School/City Library

___ Writing ___ Study Skills ___ Make and Take Items

___ Spelling ___ Math ___ Child Development

PLEASE list any other interests that you would have in your child's education

All activities are not guaranteed to be covered in our first year of the program.

6. I am interested in a support group for parents, which would meet on a regular basis throughout the school year. Members of the group would determine the structure and contents for the meetings. For example, a meeting could include time to socialize, as well as time to discuss and share ideas on a topic the group has chose or an expert could be asked to speak to the group. ___yes or ___no

If your answer was yes, to number 4, would you like to meet:

___ Once a week ___ Once a month ___ Twice a month

7. Volunteers are greatly appreciated. If interested indicate YES or NO.

8. Other Comments/Suggestions : _____

Appendix F: An Educational Night Out

POST - Parent Involvement Questionnaire

Name _____ Child's Name _____

Phone Number _____ School: _____

We would like to offer you programs or workshops on topics of interest to you.

Please fill out this survey and return it before leaving tonight's Educational Event.

1. Did this program make a difference academically for your child? In what ways?

2. What activities tonight were most useful/ least useful?

3. What activities(s) will you use at home?

4. Is there something that you will take from tonight's Night Out that you will share with someone upon leaving tonight? If so, what?

5. I would still like to attend a program on the following topics:

Reading Computers Tour School/City Library

Writing Study Skills Sibling Rivalry

Spelling Make and Take Items Math

PLEASE list any other activities that you would like to see offered _____

All activities are not guaranteed to be covered in our first year of the program.

6. How can we continue to improve the Event Night?

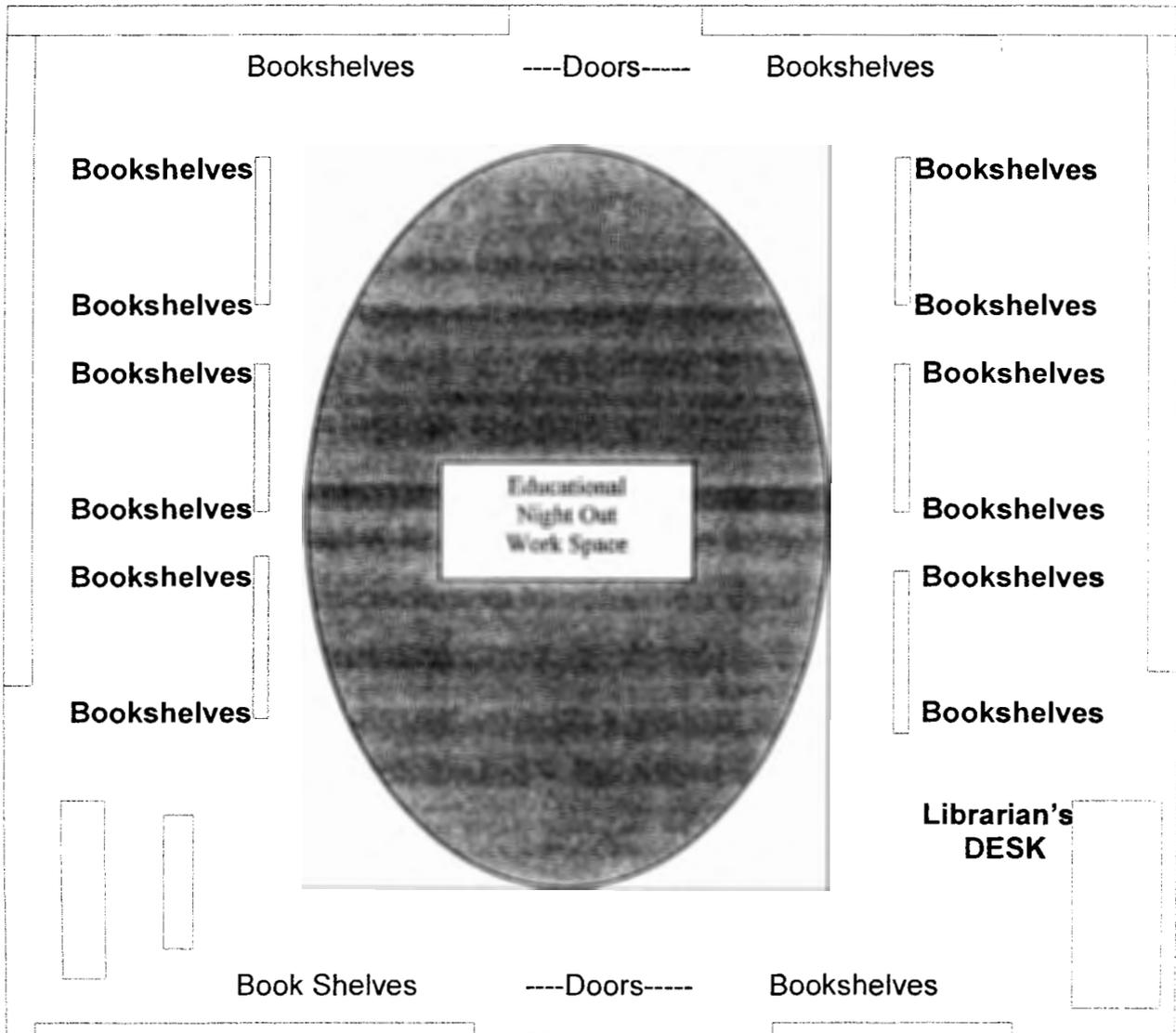
7. Comments/Suggestions : _____

8. Do you plan to return for the next Event Night? _____

Appendix: G: Media Center Floor Plan

Northeast Elementary Media Center Floor Plan

for Educational Event Night



Appendix H: Activities

Read-A-Round Activity

During our half hour Read Around time, teacher and parent volunteers model, listen, and support reading skills for kindergarten, first, and second grade students.

Each child, self selects a "just right" book to read. During our Read A Round time, the child has the book read to them 3 different times. This enables them to have it modeled to them by different styles of readers. After they have completed this, it is then their turn to read this book selection to 3 different listeners.

This Read-A-Round activity has the following benefits:

- ^ Children have ownership in selecting their book
- ^ Modeling of reading
- ^ One-on-one interaction with a variety of adults
- ^ Community involvement ~ Excellent volunteer opportunity
- ^ Chance to celebrate their growth in reading
- ^ Authentic performance of learned reading strategies
- ^ Provides a change of routine
- ^ The children love it!!

Read-A-Round Record

TITLE: _____

Read around to me:

date

1.

2.

3.

I read around to:

date

1.

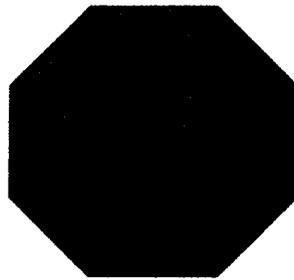
2.

3.

Pause, Prompt, Praise Procedure

PAUSE

IF your child comes to a tricky word



STOP

and give your child a chance to solve it.

PROMPT

#1

If your child does not continue:

Ask, "What can you do?"



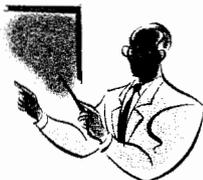
HINTS:

- ***Look at the picture***
- ***Check the first letter***
- ***Think about the story***

PROMPT

#2

If your child is still stuck on a tricky word suggest:



"Go back to the beginning of the sentence and try again."

"Think about what would make sense there."

The boy went d_____ the river.

PROMPT

#3

If your child reads a word incorrectly you can ask:

- **Does that look right?**

The boy (if said girl) got on the boat.

- **Does it sound right?**

The boy gotted on the boat.

- **Does it make sense?**

The baby (if said boy) ate candy.

PRAISE, PRAISE, PRAISE

1. Praise when the child reads well.
"I like the way you read that."



2. Praise when the child corrects him/herself.

"You knew that word didn't say _____."
"You went back there and fixed yourself."

A quick reference book mark for parents

Pause

If your child comes to a tricky word, *wait to give* the child a chance to solve it.

Prompt

if your child pauses and cannot continue, ask, "What can you do?" These are hints that I give the students:

- Look at the picture.
- Check the first letter.
- Think about the story.

If your child is still stuck on a tricky word, you may suggest:

"Go back to the beginning of the sentence and try again. Think about what would make sense there."

If the child reads a word incorrectly, you can ask some of the following questions:

- Does that look right?
- Does it sound right?
- Does it make sense?

Praise

1. Praise when the child reads a sentence correctly. Example: "You read that sentence (or story) very well."
2. Praise when the child corrects himself or herself after a mistake. Example: "You knew that word didn't say _" or "You knew that word didn't make sense."
3. Praise when the child gets a word correct after your prompt.

H___g	M___p	J___b	S___n
T___p	G___t	V___se	R___n
C___te	P___p	T___b	Sl___m

B___d

B___ke

R___t

H___te

Gr___p

F___ve

P___g

T___n

R___g

W___g

H___t

W___g

M___g	F___n	M___ce	Sp___t
J___mp	F___d	R___d	T___ne
L___p	H___me	R___le	D___t

Poetry Activity

Bedtime

The man  in the moon,

Looked  out of the moon,

Looked  out of the moon and said, 

'Tis time for all children    on the
Earth, 

To think about getting to bed .

THE CAT AND THE FIDDLE

Hey diddle diddle, the cat  and the
fiddle, 

The cow  jumped over the moon,

The little dog  laughed  to see 
such sport,

And the dish  ran away with the spoon. 



Jack Be Nimble, Jack Be Quick



Jack  be nimble,

Jack  be quick,

Jack  jump over the candlestick. 



The Muffin Man



Oh, do you know the muffin  man, 

The muffin  man,  the muffin  man, 

Oh, do you know the muffin  man, 

That lives on Drury Lane?

Oh, yes, I know the muffin  man, 

The muffin  man , the muffin  man, 

Oh, yes, I know the muffin  man, 

That lives on Drury Lane.



Compound Word Work

Rain	bow
Door	bell
Wrist	band
Snow	flake
Some	thing
Water	melon
Bee	hive
Oat	meal
Sea	shell
Key	chain

rainbow – doorbell – wristband – snowflake – something –

watermelon – beehive – oatmeal – seashell – keychain