

## Use a Checklist to Plan Your Literacy Event

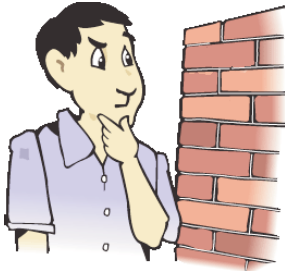
You're convinced that having a literacy event is a great idea, but how do you get started? Use this checklist:

- Recruit a steering committee** that includes:
  - » Your reading teacher or specialist.
  - » A teacher from each reading or grade level.
  - » One or two parents from each grade level.
- Set a date, time and place** for your literacy event. Get it on your school calendar. Will it be:
  - » A one night event?
  - » A series of events?
  - » A daytime event?
  - » A weekend event?
  - » Held in conjunction with another event such as a parent-teacher meeting?
- Determine the audience.** Will it be:
  - » All families in your school community?
  - » Families from a specific grade level?
  - » Other?
- Determine the structure** for the event. Will it be organized around:
  - » Centers that families can wander around to visit?
  - » A specific author such as Dr. Seuss or E.B. White?
  - » A theme such as space or nature?
  - » A seasonal event such as Halloween or Thanksgiving?
  - » A famous person such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or Thomas Jefferson?
  - » Reading skills such as decoding, comprehension and fluency?
  - » The culmination of a reading competition?
  - » Your annual book fair?
  - » Ways parents can help students read for test success?
  - » Ways parents can promote reading for fun at home?
  - » Your reading curriculum?
  - » A combination of the ideas above?



## Make it Easy for Parents to Participate

**P**arents just don't care. They don't want to get involved. We hold reading events and meetings—and they don't show up. We hear statements like these time and again. But parents do care! All parents value education for the opportunity at success it can give their children. They want their children to become successful readers. So why don't they show up? What is the barrier to their involvement?



It's important to view the barrier from the parents' perspective.

In many families, parents:

- » **Work two and three jobs** in order to provide a good education for their children.
- » **Will not take time off from work** to attend school meetings and conferences—for fear of losing their jobs.
- » **Have poor literacy skills** themselves and don't feel qualified to help with reading and other homework.

To address some of those issues:

- » **Offer to write a letter** to employers or supervisors. Explain their obligation to give employees time to attend school conferences. Politely, request time off.
- » **Work with employers** to set up meetings at the work site—in a conference room, in the cafeteria or employee lounge.

Get to know your students' families. Where do students and their families live? Try to:

- » **Organize an activity** to meet parents in their neighborhoods. Ride the bus with students, get off at each stop and meet parents who are dropping off or picking up their children. You will have made a friendly first contact.
- » **Invite parents to meet with you** at the local library. Bring along an interpreter if necessary. Browse the aisles together. Have everyone sign up for library cards.

Working together with community organizations is vital to parent involvement. Learn about the community. Attend events. Get to know community leaders. Invite them to your school.

To bring involvement to the parents:

- » **Partner with churches, recreation centers, boys and girls clubs**—any organization where families might congregate.
- » **Work together to set up meetings** and workshops in community centers.
- » **Recruit other parents in the community** to act as mentors and to help parents who have limited English skills communicate with teachers.

Your effort to meet parents where *they* are can be a huge factor in guiding students to reading success and academic achievement.



## Invitation to Literacy Night Presentation

Here is a sample invitation you can send to parents to attend Literacy Night (or any other meeting that highlights the importance of reading for school success). You'll find a Microsoft Word® version of the invitation on the CD included with this kit. You can easily adapt it to your needs. If possible, send personalized letters to parents. Word processing programs make it pretty easy and the personal touch will really pay off!

### Braddock Road Elementary School



Dear Parents,

Experts agree that reading is the foundation for school success. And no matter what a child's age, research proves that parents play an important role in building needed reading skills—skills that are the foundation for lifelong learning. Students who are good readers are more likely to:

- Do well in *every* subject.
- Turn in completed homework.
- Perform better on tests.
- Develop a lifelong habit of reading for enrichment and enjoyment.

We invite you to join us for a special program on the importance of building reading skills for lifelong learning and success. We'll discuss ways you can encourage a love of reading and help your child develop those skills right at home.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,