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IST 668: Literacy Through School Libraries
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Family Literacy Event Proposal

School Description

Belltown Middle School (based on Bellvue Middle School; see New York State Education Department, 2010) is an urban school serving grades 6-8 with an enrollment of 350 students: 120 in 6th grade, 100 in 7th grade, and 130 in 8th grade. The school is on the southwest side of a mid-sized city in upstate New York. The school's physical facilities include a library media center, gymnasium, cafeteria, auditorium, approximately 35 classrooms, playground, baseball diamond and two playing fields, and nurse's office.

The student population is primarily Black/African American (48%) and Hispanic/Latino (33%), with the balance consisting of White (18%) and Native American (2%) students. Eighty-three percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch programs, and 20% are considered Limited Language Proficient. According to New York State Education Department (2010) accountability reports, Belltown is not achieving adequate yearly progress in English Language Arts, particularly within the Hispanic/Latino, Limited English Proficient, and Economically Disadvantaged student groups, or in Mathematics, particularly for Hispanic/Latino and Limited English Proficient students.

Title

The title of our family literacy event is "Food and Culture: A Family Literacy Event." The food and culture theme will give students and families an appreciation of the diversity of foods and diet across the globe, and of the importance of food as part of culture and heritage.

Target Group Description

The students who will be invited to participate in this event are 7th grade students at Belltown. As indicated by state test scores (New York State Department of Education, 2010), many of these students have limited literacy and math skills. In addition, the limited English proficient students may have family members who are also limited in their use of English. The program involves a common reading selection for students and their families that has features that address these needs. The book is good for browsing, and it would be easy for students to read portions aloud to their families. It also reports a considerable number of statistics and presents these data in easy-to-read charts and tables. Since food is the theme, mathematics skills can be practiced in activities related to cooking. Finally, since the school is fairly diverse, students and families will be interested to share information about their own cultures (Kuglin, 2009) and will be able to learn about others, as well.

Parental involvement is expected to range from considerable involvement (parents who participate in planning committees and volunteer) to complete non-participation. In general, though, we expect that about 50 percent of parents will become involved in some aspect of the event, whether it is simply attending or helping with the program in some way prior, during, or after the event.

Committee Description

The following individuals will be encouraged to serve on the event planning committee:

- school librarian (Hutchins, Greenfeld, & Epstein, 2008)
- at least one 7th grade teacher (Hutchins et al., 2008)
- literacy/reading specialist

- at least one parent with a child in the 7th grade (Hutchins et al., 2008), perhaps recruited from or through the parent-teacher organization
- cafeteria director
- one or more members of the community, such as a public librarian, bookstore manager, and restaurant chefs (Hutchins et al., 2008; Kuflin, 2009).

The school librarian and either a 7th grade classroom teacher or literacy specialist will serve as co-chairs of the event committee. They will recruit the other members of the committee, convene meetings, and assist on all tasks. Each member of the committee will be assigned or volunteer to lead one of the following tasks (McGahey, 2007), based on interest and experience, and the rest of the committee will be available to assist on each task as needed. Set-up and clean-up will be a team effort involving the entire committee and volunteers.

- The food coordinator will arrange guest chefs and drink provisions, oversee delivery and distribution of food during the event, create a layout for the event, manage clean-up following the event, and recruit volunteers (Thomas, 2009).
- The door prize coordinator will solicit donations from area businesses, assist in purchase of gifts, recruit volunteers to help with distribution of prizes and running the raffle, and oversee raffle drawing and prize distribution throughout the event (Thomas, 2009).
- The cookbook coordinator will secure a printer (or schedule with the district printer) and manage a time line for publishing the cookbook, design the cookbook, work within the allocated budget to produce cookbooks, and arrange distribution of cookbooks to students and families.

- The finance coordinator will oversee the budgeting of the event from start to finish, and work with other coordinators to secure donations and make purchases.
- The program committee will schedule event activities, create alternate plans in case of sudden changes or program emergencies, and coordinate volunteers to run and oversee event programs (including writing activity, book discussions, food demonstrations).
- The promotions coordinator will distribute fliers, field questions about the event, handle school announcements and press releases, and encourage volunteers.

Program Outline

Date and Location

The event will take place on Friday, April 8 from 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. Several different spaces are needed to accommodate the activities planned (see “Activities,” below). The author presentation will take place in the gymnasium, to accommodate a large audience. Small group book discussions that follow will take place in the gym and classrooms, so that each group has its own space. Finally, the activity and food stations will be in the cafeteria.

Timeline

The following chart (adapted from Youth Venture, 2007) describes the tasks and events that will occur in the planning and execution of the event.

Time	Task
1 year - 6 months before the event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form an event planning committee • Determine theme/goals for the event • Assign tasks • Develop budget • Identify sources of funding • Select common reading • Set a date • Contact author

5 months before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine preliminary program/schedule of events • Select and reserve space • Contact restaurants for visiting chefs
3-4 months before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design promotional materials, bookmarks, and handouts • Review and finalize event needs (e.g., sound system, technology, physical arrangement of venue)
2 months before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit donations from local business (e.g., restaurant bookstore gift certificates, kitchen supply store baskets) • Solicit donations from teachers and parents (for cookbooks and other food-related books)
6 weeks before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send fliers to students' families • Distribute books to students' families • Post event information/flier on website • Recruit volunteers to work at the event (e.g., teachers to lead small group discussions, students to babysit younger children) • Print bookmarks, handouts
2 weeks before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize event schedule • Publicize • Send email reminder to families, if applicable • Pick up donated items from sponsors (McGahey, 2005)
1 week before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm author, chefs, venue, volunteers
Day of event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate volunteers • Set up • Clean up
After event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send thank you notes to everyone who made event possible • Meet with event planning committee to evaluate • Write event report, and include dos and don'ts for future events (McGahey, 2005) • Print and distribute cookbook to students • Distribute handouts to families unable to attend

Activities

Each student will receive a copy of Menzel and D'Alusio's (2008) *What the World Eats* to read and share with their families prior to the event. Teachers will also be encouraged to incorporate activities related to the theme of the book into their classroom activities, such as those from the accompanying teacher's guide (Cashin, 2008). These preliminary activities will

serve to stimulate student and family interest and participation in the event. Students and families who attend the event will participate in the following activities:

- Author presentation (5:30 - 6:15 p.m.): The author of the common reading will give a presentation to and field questions from the entire group of students and their families.
- Book discussion (6:30 - 7:00 p.m.): After a short break, the group will be divided into smaller groups of about 10 people each (keeping families intact) for discussions of the book and related topics. These groups will be lead by teacher volunteers.
- Activity and food stations (7:00 - 8:00 p.m.): Six areas will be defined in the cafeteria. Five of these will be set up with chefs from local restaurants that provide catering services. The restaurants will represent a variety of cuisines (e.g., Indian, Mexican, Italian, German, and Caribbean). The chefs will provide demonstrations, discuss the dishes they bring (e.g., their significance in the customs or traditions in the culture), and provide tastes for participants. The sixth station will involve participants in a writing activity. Families will bring a favorite family recipe to the event, and they will write stories that describe traditions, customs, holidays, or interesting stories related to the dish (adapted from Indiana Historical Society, 2010). Families also have the option to draw a picture to accompany their story.
- Evaluation survey and raffle drawing (8:00 - 8:30 p.m.): Each family will receive an evaluation survey (see “Evaluation Method” below) to complete together. When they turn it in, they will be entered into a raffle for a number of donated gift cards and baskets. Winners will be selected and prizes will be awarded, at the end of the evening.

Attendance Incentive

Many incentives can be used to encourage attendance (Rehmer, 2007). In this case, the food provided by local restaurants is a great incentive. There will also be free take-aways for all families, including teacher- and parent-donated cookbooks and other food-related books, bookmarks with food and culture information, and handouts with a list of suggested resources and related activities. Finally, there will be a free raffle, using completed evaluation forms as the “tickets.” Prizes will include gift cards donated by local bookstores and restaurants, and cooking gift baskets donated by local kitchen supply stores, the PTA, and/or teachers.

Attendance Estimate

We expect that about 50% of the students in the 7th grade class will attend, along with some of their family members. A good estimate is 40-60 students, or 100-130 total participants, including parents, siblings, and other family members.

Publicity Methods

The following methods will be used to publicize the event:

- a bilingual (English-Spanish) full-color flyer sent home and posted on school bulletin boards
- a digital version of the flyer to be posted on the school website
- in-school announcements, to generate student interest (Hutchins et al., 2008)
- a notice in the school newsletter
- a news release sent to local press outlets (McCormack, 2005; McGahey, 2005)

Evaluation Method

A survey will be distributed at the end of the evening, that will contain questions such:

- I enjoyed this family literacy event. [Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree]

- The information shared was useful to me. [scale of agreement, as above]
- Which activity did you most enjoy?
- What is one thing you learned from any of the activities?
- How might you follow up tonight's activities at home with your family?
- What suggestions do you have to improve the family literacy event?

Follow-up Activities

The theme of the family literacy event can be continued in activities at school and at home to reinforce literacy skills, as well as skills in other curricular areas. Any of the following activities would be appropriate follow-ups:

- Families can continue to share recipes on a blog developed for this purpose. Other participants can comment on them after trying them at home. Event organizers can also use this space to share online resources and information related to the event.
- The teacher-librarian and/or ELA teacher could collaborate with a nearby elementary school and have middle school students visit the school to read food-themed children's books (e.g., doghillkitchen, 2009) to the students.
- Teachers can require follow-up projects related to the reading selection (such as those in Cashin, 2008) or the theme of the evening, in general (e.g., kitchen science activities, such as those suggested by Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, 2010).
- The cafeteria can serve food from different cultures and provide food/culture programs during lunchtime once a week or month.

- A display of international cookbooks and other cooking/food-related books (e.g., Angela Wilkes' *Internet-Linked Children's World Cookbook*; Matthew Locricchio's *The International Cookbook for Kids*; the manga series, *Iron Wok Jan!*) could be put on display at the library.
- A number of Internet resources could be shared on the library website, such as: Food Tales @ My Baby Monsters: A children's collaborative storytelling podcast (<http://mybabymonsters.com/stories/educational-stories/podcast-episode-1-or-30-something-food/141>); The Food Timeline (<http://www.foodtimeline.org/index.html>); Jeremy Cooks: "The place for teens who love to cook" (<http://jeremycooks.com/>); and Kitchen Confidential: Stories about cooking, eating, and assorted food issues @ The Stoop Storytelling Series (<http://www.stoopstorytelling.com/shows/38>)

Budget

The following table outlines the cost of items required for executing the event.

Item Description	Estimated Cost
Copies of common reading for each family (100)	\$1550.00
Author visit	\$1900.00
Cookbook printing and binding (100 copies)	\$400.00
Flyers (color copies for bulletin boards; 100 b/w copies for sending home)	\$50.00
Chefs/catering	\$1000.00
Beverages	\$20.00
Bookmarks (100)	\$50.00
Handouts (resources/activities take-away, family recipe writing activity, evaluation survey) (100 copies)	\$15.00
Pens, pencils, markers	\$15.00
Gift certificates, cooking gift baskets, cookbooks (donated)	\$0.00
Plates, cups, silverware (cafeteria)	\$0.00
Total	\$5000.00

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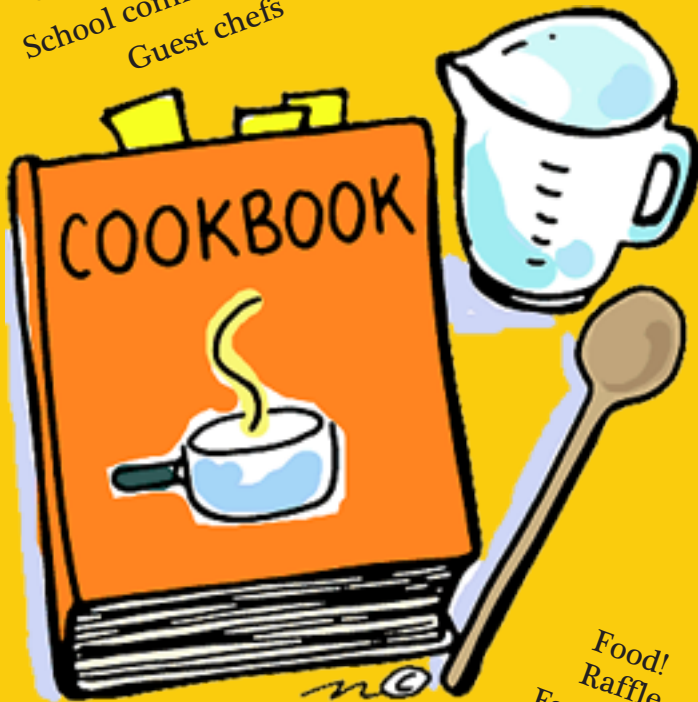
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Food and Culture: A Family Literacy Event

Comida y Cultura: un evento familiar de alfabetización

Reading
Cooking demonstrations
School community cookbook
Guest chefs



Food!
Raffle
Family time
Door prizes

¡Venga la parte su cultura!
Come share our culture!



Regalos
Participación de chefs
Tiempo de familia



Rifa
Lecturas
Demonstraciones de cocina
Alimento

7th graders and family invited
Childcare provided

Friday, April 8
5:30-8:30

Séptimo grado y familias
Servicio de cuidado para niños

Viernes, 8 de Abril
5:30-8:30