

What is a Family Literacy Night?

Family Literacy Night is when a school gives parents and their children a time, a place, and some helpful guidelines from an experienced teacher to write, read, and share their ideas. Its purpose is to write for individual enjoyment and build a stronger sense of writing as a benefit to the family and to the school community. There are many forms that a FLN can take, but what they all have in common is writing and public sharing about a given theme.

Typically, a FLN would consist of:

- A welcome/explanation of what the theme or focus for the evening's writing will be
- Everyone writes
- Small group sharing
- Author's Chair
- Wrap up/collection of writing pieces for publication

Having entire families writing together is a powerful demonstration of commitment to the importance of writing. A Family Literacy Night that allows all of the authors in the room a chance to surprise and enlighten themselves and others will be a memorable event.

What are some planning considerations?

One of the first things to do in planning a FLN is to decide the theme the writing will address. The staff and parents at the school are in the best position to know this, and one of the first planning meetings ought to center on the question, "What do you want to focus on with this FLN?" Some basic questions to consider are:

- Is it open only to the students and parents of the school?
- Should it be opened up to the community to help foster better communication with the school?
- Is the main purpose for parents to see their students as writers, or is it for the students to see their parents as writers? Can it be both of these?

It is important for the facilitator to promote an open and honest exchange of ideas. The "agenda" is what type of writing focus the school community feels is best for their needs at that time. Of course, there are real-world limits of expertise, money and time to consider, but within those constraints almost any kind of writing can be chosen.

What can be done to make sure ALL families know they are invited, even those that don't often feel welcomed into the school?

Send an invitational letter to each family in English or whatever other language(s) are appropriate for that school's community. In the letter be sure to say that all families are welcome, and that English language fluency is not necessary.

If possible, provide a translator for the Family Literacy Night, and put that in the invitation letter.

Time	Activity	Person(s) responsible
6:30-6:40	Sign in, find seats, fill out raffle tickets	Teacher 1 and Teacher 2
6:40-6:50	Welcome and introduction to what we'll be doing	Leader
6:50-7:00	Small group brainstorming	Everyone
7:00-7:20	Writing	Everyone
7:20-7:30	Refreshments	Teacher 3
7:30-7:50	Sharing	Leader
7:50-8:00	Raffle	Teacher 4