



SAMPLER

IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING WITH FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

**In writing class, I explore what I think, feel and know.
When I share stories with family, they see my skills grow.**

Students show what they know when they record their thoughts in writing. Using pen and paper or composing on computers, students reflect on what they have learned, what they think and wonder about, and how they feel. Some writing is private, but some writing helps students share ideas with a parent, other family members, and with community partners.

Parents love to hear what their children write. A kindergartener may write a sentence to explain a drawing; a middle schooler may write a poem about spring; a high schooler may write an essay about a local or world event. When students share their writing at home, their parents witness learning-in-action.

At every grade level, teachers may organize homework and school activities that enable students to engage a family or community partner at any stage of the writing process.

- As they plan stories, poems, essays, and writing projects, students may interview a parent, grandparent, or neighbor about their experiences, beliefs, memories, and ideas.
- When a draft has been written, students may read it aloud to gather reactions, suggestions, and to see, themselves, if they missed a capital letter, a period, or a main idea.
- Students may prepare final copies of some writing projects for “published books” that are shared in school and community assemblies, and in other exciting ways.

Every writing style may benefit from student and parent interactions. This includes assignments to write a short story, biography, humorous narrative, friendly letters, business letters, book reports, TV-show reviews, fairy tales, mysteries, and more. Assignments that are shared at home also may include articles for a student newspaper, blog, or website.

When students practice a “how to” speech at home, they are more likely to give a

smooth and clear presentation in class. Community connections also reinforce the importance of writing. Students may conduct oral history projects, read their poems or stories at the public library, YMCA, senior citizens’ center, or other venues.

As they converse about writing topics, students and parents will share their values, traditions, activities, and opinions. These exchanges help students and family partners bond and get to understand each other’s views and experiences.

Improve Classroom Teaching

The activities in this *Sampler* were implemented by schools working with NNPS across the years. They illustrate how Action Teams for Partnerships and teachers designed writing assignments to activate the six types of involvement and to strengthen students’ writing skills. The activities show how to organize workshops for parents to explain the school’s writing process; guide students and their parents to write books together about family traditions and memories; present students’ poetry to an audience of parents; write tales in more than one language; and engage professional writers from the community in inspiring ways.

Individual teachers and grade level teams may use or adapt the sample activities. For example, any reading, writing, or science teacher could adapt the activity *It’s Raining Pudding* to encourage students and parents to share ideas for stories on weather events. Teachers of many subjects can link reading with many forms of writing, as in *Readapalooza*.

The ten examples in this *Sampler*, arranged alphabetically, are a few of many excellent activities in NNPS annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. See more at www.partnershipschools.org in Success Stories.

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Review of Research: Family and Community Involvement to Improve Students' Writing

Joyce L. Epstein and Frances L. Van Voorhis

Children's writing may be the best evidence of their thinking and learning. This long-held belief underlies "new directions" for school improvement. For example, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) emphasize student writing across the curriculum (2012). Students will be expected, for example, to explain their math strategies and answers in writing. This goal is not really "new." It has been stressed by good teachers for decades, and writing samples have been part of some state achievement tests. With most states adopting CCSS, the importance of writing-to-learn will be widespread. Family and community engagement in writing and language arts will help teachers guide students to improve their writing skills.

For several decades, researchers have conducted studies to identify effective approaches to teach writing. Particular attention was earned by the *Bay Area Writing Process*—renamed the *National Writing Project* (Daniels and Zemelman, 1985). This instructional intervention produced consistently significant effects on students' writing skills, compared to students in control groups. By contrast, there have been fewer studies of the effects of family and community engagement on students' writing skills. The studies that have been conducted, however, point in a clear direction.

Preschool level. A few studies reported effects of parental involvement with preschool children on early reading and emergent writing skills. For example, home visits that demonstrated reading readiness activities and encouraged parental involvement with young children over two years significantly increased students' early reading and writing skills and social behaviors, compared to children in a control group (Sheridan, et al., 2011). Workshops for parents to support children's literacy skills (3-5 years old) were part of effective interventions that increased reading and writing readiness (Aram & Biron, 2004).


Elementary grades. A major study that followed students from kindergarten to grade 3 reported that parental engagement with children on reading and writing activities increased literacy skills (e.g., vocabulary, invented spelling, comprehension), which should improve students' writing skills (Senechal & Lefevre, 2002). A meta-analysis of 30 studies of interventions to engage families with children on literacy activities at home reported small, but significant, effects of parental involvement on story writing and related skills for students in treatment vs. control groups (Van Steensel, McElvany, Kurvers, & Herppich, 2011).

Middle grades. Two studies of *Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Language Arts* interactive homework in the middle grades are particularly informative. TIPS assignments guide students to discuss and share writing and language arts skills (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) with a family partner (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2009). In one study, over 600 students' writing samples were independently coded in the fall, winter, and spring. With students' fall scores statistically controlled, students who conducted TIPS activities with a family partner improved the quality of their writing from fall to winter and winter to spring (Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1997).

A two-year study of *TIPS-Language Arts* followed students from grade 6 to 7 in an urban school district (Van Voorhis, 2009). More parents of TIPS students were engaged with their middle schoolers, whereas more parents of control-group students reported that they needed more information to be involved with their child on language arts homework. Compared to the control group, parents of TIPS students reported more positive emotions when working with their child on language arts homework, and, with background variables controlled, TIPS students had higher language arts achievement test scores (Van Voorhis, 2011). The studies suggest that when teachers design homework for students to share their writing with a family partner, more families become involved and students improve their attitudes about writing and their writing skills.

Looking ahead. Large-scale, longitudinal studies are needed on the effects of school outreach to engage families with students on writing. Still, based on confirmed results to date, educators are engaging parents with their children on writing and language arts skills, as illustrated by the practices in this *Sampler*.

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FAMILY WRITING

Highlands Elementary School

Naperville, Illinois

A parent survey at Highlands Elementary revealed an interest in learning more about the writing process. The survey findings coincided with the school improvement goal focused on writing and were discussed with the Building Leadership Team. The School, Family, and Community Partnerships Literacy Committee, consisting of teachers, parents, and the Learning Resource Center (LRC) director, considered different ways to meet the needs of the parents. The committee decided on three teacher-led parent workshops that would provide participants with a greater familiarity with the writing process, specifically narrative, persuasive, and expository writing, and a greater understanding of the writing ISAT test.

The Literacy Committee began planning the workshops in the spring prior to the upcoming school year so that the workshops could be held by the end of September. Part of the workshop preparation included developing a writing handbook for parents and staff. The first of three workshops included an overview of the writing process, genres, and the ISAT test. Student writing samples for grades kindergarten through five were also presented. For the next two workshops, parents were separated into primary and intermediate sessions. These sessions provided more depth in the areas of narrative, persuasive,

and expository writing. All sessions were videotaped for parents who could not attend one or more sessions and for families entering the school during the year. The Literacy Committee completed their work on this activity by editing and producing the video.

Highlands' School, Family, and Community Partnerships budget funded the parent workshop series. Teachers received stipends to cover their time spent preparing materials, collaborating across grades, and facilitating the workshops. The budget also covered the expenses of pencils for each participant and bulletin board supplies.

Family Writing was evaluated through an exit survey and informal feedback. Parents reported gaining a better understanding of the writing process and how to support student writing at home. Next year, the Literacy Committee will change the name of the activity to Parent Writing Workshop. They will also conduct the workshops in early October and may change the format from three evenings to two evenings with each session lasting one and a half hours. Making improvements each year will help families help their children to become better writers.



IT'S RAINING PUDDING

**VINTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VINTON, LOUISIANA**

Plop. Plop. Plop. Students of Vinton Elementary got to intern as weather reporters for an evening. They were tasked to piece together a story on a common occurrence: a rather unexceptional day, except that on this day, it happened to rain . . . chocolate pudding.

Pre-K–5th-graders were primed for the English and Language Arts (ELA) It's Raining Chocolate Pudding event by other stories about unusual forms of precipitation. Teachers read Felicia Bond's *The Day It Rained Hearts* to the lower grades, while the older students heard Judi Barrett's *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*. These served as the appetizers for a writing event in which all students participated: to describe the sights, sounds, smells, and—of course—tastes of an imaginary torrent of the soft, fudgy dessert pudding.

The exercise dovetailed with a number of the school's ELA improvement goals that reflected the analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills assessed on the state's LEAP and ILEAP tests. Furthermore, parents got to experience aspects of their children's ELA education firsthand.

Parents were asked to participate with their children in every step of the process. After brainstorming in groups, students employed a “four-square” method to start writing, in which a sheet of paper is divided into four quadrants, with a fifth square drawn in the center. Lower grade levels—2nd and below—filled each portion of the diagram with a single sentence, with their topic sentence in the center. Upper grades—3rd and up—did the same, with whole paragraphs in each section. Students then used these sheets as guides to compose their final paragraph or essay on the aforementioned custard phenomenon.

In addition to inviting parents to get involved, students also were encouraged to participate in the planning process. Any student who attended the planning meeting received a copy of *The Day It Rained Hearts* from the teachers.

Total expenses, paid with Title I funds, were \$350. Organizers advise others who want to conduct a similar activity to ensure that students have enough time to complete the assignment and to secure sufficient space for all attendees.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) will ask local celebrities to read to students at future ELA events to generate more enthusiasm among students, parents, and the community at large.

Students relished the non-traditional writing prompt, as well as the opportunity to work in a more relaxed environment. For their efforts, students and parents were rewarded afterwards with—what else?—cups of chocolate pudding. Said one, “You could almost smell the chocolate pudding before we opened the packages.”



MEMORY MAKERS

T. H. WATKINS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE CHARLES, LOUISIANA

Looking to increase parent involvement at school events, coordinators at T. H. Watkins Elementary figured the best way to get more families to the school was to make the event *about* what makes each family unique—their stories. Tasked to bring only their favorite memories and their willingness to be inspired by their kids, parents joined their children at the school one evening for the first-ever Memory Makers Family Book Writing Event.

Citing research that connects parent involvement to better grades and test scores, the school's Curriculum Coordinator explained that the school drew its inspiration from an item that had been sold at the previous year's book fair. With a grant from the Junior League of Lake Charles and some PTO funding from the school (totaling \$2,800), event organizers bought a book-making kit for every T. H. Watkins student. These kits contained everything that the children, from grades Pre-K–5, would need to “publish” their own book about their family—everything, of course, except for the memories.

Teachers integrated the kits into their class curriculum, assigning the early stages of the project as classwork and homework assignments. First, teachers presented books that were written by children in order to motivate them to participate in the event. Students were also encouraged to involve their families in the homework assignments, in which they created “flow maps” to sequence the ideas of the story they would tell, followed by preparing the text that would appear in their own Memory Makers book.

All that remained was to illustrate the pages, and that is what the Memory Makers evening was designed to do. Two different evenings in March were set aside to give family members an opportunity to schedule the best time to “make memories” with their children. On the night of the event, families collaborated with their child in finishing a creative product using student-

produced materials and the kits for illustration.

Turnout for the first night was too large for the space that had been reserved—the school library—and so the crowd spilled over into two classrooms. As a result, the second evening event was held in the larger “commons” area of the school.

By working together, students benefited from positive and creative contacts with their family members. At the end of the night, everyone brought home a tangible reminder of the fun they had, both at the event and in sharing their family's history.

The evening closed after the books were bound and each family group read its story together. The school combined the Memory Makers event with a Book Fair. After the book-making was finished, parents and children proceeded to the book-buying area.

Compared to previous events with lower family attendance, the Memory Makers event was a measurable success, both in terms of numbers of participants and their qualitative assessments. Many expressed a desire to participate in a similar creative/collaborative event with their families. One parent said it best: “I learned that using my imagination plus my child's imagination is dangerously funny!”



OPEN MIC POETRY CAFÉ NIGHT

OPELOUSAS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA

Tapping into students' interest in poetry gave Opelousas Junior High an opportunity to enhance its annual book fair and literacy night by showcasing students' talents. Considering that reading and writing poetry improve students' reading skills, the Open Mic Poetry Café Night also helped the school further its academic goal of increasing students' comprehension levels and overall proficiency in English Language Arts.

It was several students' great interest in writing poetry that led the Opelousas faculty to explore ways to engage students through this art. "We thought this would be an awesome outlet for them to express their feelings about their lives," said the school librarian. Through their work with a non-profit program called Festival of Words, several faculty members knew that it was possible to invite a local writer to visit schools to read and teach poetry. Writers who participated were known not only for their skills as poets but also for their talents as teachers.

Opelousas was fortunate to have Tony Daspit, a professor from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, read his poetry and teach a poetry workshop for 25 students chosen for their interest in poetry.

Building on this unique activity, the school decided to spread enthusiasm for poetry through the Open Mic Poetry Café Night. As part of an all-school effort, the art teacher and her students transformed an empty classroom into a poetry café with a stage and decorations to get everyone in the mood for some spoken word magic. "It was a perfect setting to bring out the 'word nerd' in everybody," said the librarian.

On the night of the event, families, staff, community members, and students came to enjoy an hour of student poetry and shop at a book fair. Parents expressed their excitement and pride in their children's talent for writing poetry and for their bravery in sharing their inner selves. The youngsters were, clearly, happy with the applause. They all wanted to know when the next Open Mic Night would occur.

The real strength of the event was demonstrated by the spirit and camaraderie of families, community, teachers, and students. Everyone benefited from seeing just how much talent these students exhibited.

The students took home entertaining and informative books from the book fair. Parents and teachers took home even more from the Open Mic Night—knowledge of the talents of their budding poets. The greatest benefit may have come to those young writers who learned not to fear reading in front of a crowd and to enjoy sharing their thoughts with others.



Opening Windows to Writing

*Ranch View Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois*

The students became teachers—for a night—at Ranch View Elementary School. And their parents became the students as they spent an evening getting acquainted with how the youngsters learn to write. Through a PowerPoint presentation starring its students and teachers, the school conducted “Opening Windows to Writing,” a session on the Six Traits Writing Process.

“We are a learning community with a common understanding and vision for writing,” said the event’s planners. Showing parents that vision and letting them know how they can support writing instruction at home was one of the school improvement goals.

Opening Windows was created as part of Back to School Curriculum Night—an event that normally draws 80 to 90 percent of the school’s parents. The School/Family/Community Partnership (SFCP) team decided to capitalize on this terrific turnout by explaining the writing curriculum. That decision proved a good one; more than 400 parents and 50 faculty and staff members took part in the session.


Teacher leaders—one for grades K-2 and one for grades 3-5—designed and delivered the PowerPoint presentation and accompanying handouts. The teachers videotaped students from each grade so parents heard the students, in their own voices, describing the Six Traits and how they use them while learning to write.

One parent happily learned that she was already on the right track: “It made me realize I was doing the right thing by encouraging story writing, even at this age.”

The SFCP team designed the Opening Windows presentation after hosting a similar—and very successful—program on the school’s reading curriculum. The district curriculum department paid the teachers for two hours of planning time to develop the PowerPoint presentation. The team publicized the event in the Curriculum Night brochure, advertising that students played a major part in the presentation—a definite draw.

“Terrific” parent involvement made the event especially successful, and parent members of the SFCP team used the night to recruit new members. “It brought new interest in becoming part of our team,” said one member.

Overall, the SFCP team considered the event well worth the effort. “The end product is a parent population with a good understanding of what we are doing in the classroom.”



PARENTS AS AUTHORS

Loreto Elementary School

Los Angeles, California

Loreto Elementary School is located in a low socio-economic area where many parents are newly arrived immigrants and have minimal schooling and/or writing ability. In an effort to involve more parents to support their children's writing, Loreto Elementary sent a cadre of teachers to a district training focused on involving parents as authors. The district training was led by two prominent children's authors. After the training, the Loreto teachers invited all parents to a series of writing workshops.

For about three months, the Loreto teachers met on Thursday mornings from 8:00-9:30 am with parents interested in learning about the writing process. Parents wrote books about themselves and acrostic poems about their children. (An acrostic poem is a series of lines in which certain letters, usually the first in each line, form a name or motto when read in sequence.) Parents expanded their poems and added pictures of family. The teachers conducted extra workshops for those parents who struggled with writing. When parents completed the books, they made a video presentation of their autobiographies and gave the video presentation and their books to the children.

The administration supported the workshops by arranging for classroom coverage for the teachers conducting the writing workshops. The administration also provided

the materials to construct the parent books.

Ten parents attended the workshops. Their beautiful books demonstrated parents' commitment to the project. In addition, a fifth-grade teacher used the training with the parents of her 40 students to create culmination gifts for the children. At the end-of-year ceremony, parents read passages from their books to their children. The students loved their books, and the teacher plans to train parents as authors every year.

Parents had a better understanding of how children learn to write using the writing process. One parent said, "I never thought I could be a writer, and now I can share this book I wrote with my child." "I loved this training, and now I have three beautiful books that my children will be able to share with their own children," stated another parent.

Next year, Loreto Elementary will integrate the workshops into their classroom curriculum to increase the number of parents learning about the writing process. They anticipate doubling the number of parents who participate. Not only will the numbers of parents involved in their children's education increase, but so to will the numbers of children respecting their parents' knowledge and life experiences.



Pen Pals

LaMoure Public School

LaMoure, North Dakota

A few hundred handwritten letters helped hone the writing skills of students at LaMoure Public School last year. The in-school Pen Pals program not only gave students the opportunity to correspond with their friends, but also to share the experience with their parents.

The school's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) adapted the letter writing program from the regular curriculum. For some years, teachers had been helping students write letters to one another as part of their Language Arts program. ATP members decided to involve parents in the project this year.

At the beginning of January, the principal assigned each student a pen pal from another classroom. "We try to keep the pen pals within one grade level of each other so they have some things in common," she explained. The assignment was simple: each student would write one letter each week to his or her pen pal during the month. Parents were to lend helping hands. ATP members created parent information packets that contained an instruction sheet on the parts of a letter, the dos and don'ts of letter etiquette, and sample letters.

Older students learned the intricacies of friendly letters—salutations, date and address styles, and the correct way to sign such a letter. Young students took a simpler approach, filling their letters with short sentences and plenty of pictures. Teachers checked to see that students were writing their letters.

The pen pals were divided into two groups. One group mailed its letters on Tuesdays in a mailbox made by high school shop students. The other group on Fridays. Sixth-graders delivered the letters. Twice a week, they donned letter carrier uniforms, donated by the local post office, and sorted and stamped the letters. They put the letters in their mailbags and delivered them to each classroom.

At the end of the month, administrators hosted a Pen Pals Picnic to celebrate the end of the project and let the pals meet. Students decided, in their letters, who would bring games, picnic blankets, or extra foodstuffs. The cafeteria staff prepared a special picnic lunch. Once the pen pal pairs filled their trays, they headed to the school gymnasium where they sat on blankets, played games, and ate with their new friends.

Teachers noticed significant improvement in writing skills. Parents gave Pen Pals high marks as well.

"It was fun helping them write letters," one parent said, while another commented, "How many of us do that anymore, with e-mailing and texting?"



Readapalooza

*Orchard Hills School
Milford, Connecticut*

For one week in the middle of each year, students at Orchard Hills School recharge their batteries and lift their energy level by celebrating reading and writing with Readapalooza. During this week, students, teachers, and parents engage in activities that range from themed lunches and dressing up as storybook characters to visits from local authors and the publishing of students' written work.

To kick off Readapalooza, a parent volunteer dresses up as a popular storybook character and greets children as they get off the bus, visits the cafeteria at lunch, and reads to the younger grades. Each day of the week has its own theme, such as Storybook Character Day, Poetry, Biography, Creative Writing, and Favorite Book/Character Day. Some school lunches relate to a book, such as spaghetti served in honor of the book *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*. Local authors and illustrators visit to share their published work and tell the struggles involved with being a writer or artist—often the same struggles the students themselves face. Students read and write poetry in class, and at some point during the week the public librarian visits to discuss using library resources and obtaining a library card. Each classroom decorates a bulletin board with the class's favorite book. Because Orchard Hills School has an in-house publishing center, published student work is used to create sequencing activities for each class. The stories are cut into strips, with one sentence on each, and placed in a bag. Students take these sentence strips and try to reassemble the original story.

A parent unable to volunteer at the school during the day started Readapalooza eight years ago, and since then the PTA has worked with the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) to implement it annually. Parents plan most of the weeklong event, while school staff provides some ideas and plans classroom extensions based on the themes chosen. Two reading consultants, the media specialist, the principal, and anyone else interested in Readapalooza round out the planning committee. The PTA provides funding for the event, most of which is spent on the costume for the parent volunteer and the outside speakers. It also publicizes the event through the school newsletter, fliers, meetings, and word of mouth.

Orchard Hills School continues its Readapalooza program each year because it "is a novel way to support a love for reading and writing." Parents have lots of opportunities to become involved with the event, from planning or reading at home to coming into the school to read a book to their child. As one parent explained, "I enjoyed Readapalooza, because I saw how excited the kids got about reading."



THE LION AND THE MOUSE: TRI-LINGUAL FAMILY STORYTELLING

**L'ETOILE DU NORD FRENCH IMMERSION SCHOOL
ST. PAUL, MN**

Families at L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion School speak 28 languages at home. This means that some of the elementary school's 640 students are working to become bilingual in English and French, and some are working to become tri-lingual. English Language Learners are working to retain and improve their home language, English, and French. To help Spanish-speaking families share their languages with their children, the school implemented a family storytelling project that used three languages to engage families with children as authors.

Latino families, including parents, siblings, and extended family members, worked together at home to interpret Jerry Pinkney's award-winning wordless picture book, *The Lion and the Mouse*. The students and family members worked together to write their own versions of the folktale in Spanish, and the students brought their stories to school. The English Language Learner and classroom French teachers helped students translate their family stories into English and French. Next, students created handmade triptych books with three pockets, each pocket holding an illustrated pamphlet of their original *Lion and the Mouse* story in English, Spanish, or French.

The school and Saint Paul community embraced the budding tri-lingual authors by celebrating their efforts. Students read their stories aloud to their classrooms in celebration of L'Etoile du Nord's first Cinco de Mayo Celebration. Later that month, the district presented the books for public display at its annual End-of-Year Latino Celebration.

The L'Etoile du Nord team was able to share the results of this Family Storytelling program with many groups. They presented the project at the first Latino Parent Network of the

year in September, then to the PTO, the Site Council, and the Latino Parent Advisory Committee at the St. Paul Public School district. They wrote an article in the school newsletter, presented the project at the Humphrey College of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, and had two proposals accepted to present at various language acquisition conferences at the district and University.

For a successful Tri-Lingual Family Storytelling project, the planning team advises starting small and providing follow-up communications and support for every family. L'Etoile du Nord piloted the program with fifteen families. Costs were \$225 for five copies of *The Lion and the Mouse* and \$100 for paper and book board, which the participating teachers paid for voluntarily. Teachers in this school agree that it is important for students to feel positive about their home language and confident about their progress in English and in French.

The Tri-Lingual Family Storytelling Project aimed to improve students' language skills and oral fluency, while encouraging parental involvement. One Latino parent opined, "It is important for children to practice talking in French and Spanish, too." Another said, "We need these opportunities so we can participate more [at home and at school]."



Writing Rules!

*Chanhassen Elementary School
Chanhassen, Minnesota*

A local writer brought out the best in elementary students' prose last year during a literary arts initiative at Chanhassen Elementary School. The new Writing Rules! program turned a dozen students into published authors and helped to raise reading test scores throughout the school.

Chanhassen's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) decided to implement its version of Writing Rules! to promote one of its improvement goals for the year: increasing achievement in writing for all of its students in kindergarten through fifth grade. District officials had already mandated that all schools teach writing according to Writing Rules!, a six-point plan emphasizing organization, ideas, word choice, fluency, conventions, and presentation.

Parent volunteers on the school's ATP thought that, with their participation, the school could do more than simply implement the curriculum in the classroom. One member, a grandparent and professional writer, decided to create a tool to help parents encourage good writing at home. She wrote and edited a quarterly newsletter that explained the basic rules of the program and gave parents tips to help students edit their work. Taking things a step farther, she hosted an after-school writing workshop where the students in the upper grades worked on their writing in a creative setting.

The school newspaper publicized the program, and included a registration flier. The grandparent volunteer visited classrooms to get students excited about the program. The staff also featured the Writing Rules! program during the annual "Arts and Academics" open house, giving visiting parents an opportunity to learn more about it.

The grandparent volunteer led five sessions of the Young Authors Workshop, emphasizing the "voice" aspect of writing and encouraging students to get really creative with

their words. Students shared their work with one another and participated in a peer editing process. At the end of the Young Authors Workshop sessions, parents attended a student reading of their work. Each student left the workshop as a "published" author with their writing in a bound collection, complete with student illustrations.

By the end of the semester, Chanhassen's program had yielded success for its students. Thanks to the new writing resources, test scores were up across the school. Parents had a better understanding of the writing model and learned concrete ways to help their children improve their writing. These parents said they were eager to have their children practice writing, thus, reinforcing the classroom work.

The workshops cost about \$300. The school used funds provided by the PTA and some district funds to cover the expenses.

Chanhassen plans to continue the program and hopes to include others writers, especially in the workshops.