



JESSE WHITE • Secretary of State & State Librarian

Illinois Center for the Book

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FAMILY READING NIGHT IDEAS

From past Family Reading Night participants.

Program Idea	Additional Explanation
Author Visits and/or Book Signings	Invite authors to read and/or speak at your Family Reading Night event. Some authors may be interested in signing books as well.
Bilingual Read A-louds	Favorite books are read page by page, first in English and then another language. Different stations can also be identified in English and another language.
Book Fair	Scholastic book fairs are very popular.
Book Walk	Similar to a cake walk but with books given as prizes.
Book-themed Events	Popular themes include: sports, Rebecca Caudill books, camping, spies and detectives, fairy tales, Thanksgiving, health and nutrition, fitness, knights, a Day at the Beach, a safari, mysteries, cowboys/western, multi-cultural, transportation.
* “Books Are Full of Characters” Theme	Students share their favorite books and dress as their favorite book characters. A character parade can also be held. Stations are decorated based on themes of favorite books.
* “How Does Your Garden Grow?” Theme	Read books about gardening. Read directions to plant seeds. Children leave the plants at school and learn to take care of them. Snacks using the same vegetables planted are provided on recipe cards. These are read and made together as a family.
* “Mystery Night” Theme	Read mystery books. Solve a special mystery by decoding secret messages at each station — words cut out of newspapers/magazines, invisible ink, reading small clues with magnifying glass, reading messages in a mirror, etc.
*“Treasure Hunt” Theme	Read a favorite book and have a treasure hunt based on the book theme. Leave picture or word clues for students to follow to reach a book-themed treasure.
Build-a-Book	Participants create individual books from a kit and other materials.
Co-sponsored and Partnership Events	Partner with larger organizations or corporations, colleges or universities, or other literacy groups, public libraries or school libraries. Examples: Literacy Coalitions, Publishers, RIF, First Book, etc.
Costumed Readers	Books are read by popular characters like: Frosty the Snowman, Mrs. Clause, Tooth Fairy, Mother Goose, Princess, Knight, Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz, Pirate, Witch, Juggler, Clifford, Elmo, Scooby Doo, Ms. Frizzle, Junie B. Jones, Emily Elizabeth, Fancy Nancy, Amelia Earhart, Paul Revere, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, professional sports mascots and school mascots.
Create a Project	Read a book about the small project to be made that evening. Read directions for the project as a family. Work together to create the project.
Dinner Provided/ Potluck	Have book-themed dinner or group supper/potluck.
Family Reading Club	In early November, families pick up a bag with five books to read at home (based on ages of family members) along with juice boxes and microwave popcorn.
Family Reading Kits	Individualized kits with books, snacks, stickers, bookmarks, coloring and activity sheets, and other surprises are created for families to take home for FRN.

Program Idea	Additional Explanation
First Lines of Books Contest	The first lines of favorite children's books are read and the children guess the name of the book.
Free Books	Each child who attends receives a book to take home.
Games, Crafts, and Snacks	Coordinated activities including games, crafts and refreshments go with event themes.
Guest Readers/ Readers Theater	Invite local authors, community leaders, principals, librarians, veterinarians, military personnel, police officers, fire fighters, doctors, nurses, ballerinas, pilots, farmers, sports players/professional athletes, etc. to read favorite children's books. Readers in uniform are the most popular!
Pajama Party	Kids wear their pajamas, bring stuffed animals, eat snacks and read books with their families on a blanket.
Passport for Activities	Receive a free book after visiting and getting a stamp at each passport station.
Prizes and Raffles	Prizes are awarded or raffles held for returning signed reading forms. Prizes include books, book bags, pencils, bookmarks, stickers, books and gift certificates.
Puppet Shows or Theaters	Read a story. Make puppet characters out of small paper bags. Let the students put on the puppet show. A show can also be presented by older students, teachers or a professional production troupe.
Read a Recipe and Make the Snack	Favorite snack recipes and ingredients are made available for the children to read together with their family and select one (or two!) to make.
Read at Home with Your Family and Write About It	Students write a description of their evening of reading. Family members read or share favorite passages, books and magazines.
Reading Under the Stars	A camp setting with tents, glow-in-the-dark stars, sleeping bags, lanterns and camp chairs is created for reading bedtime stories.
Regional Theater Group Productions	Contact your local colleges, universities, high school and community drama clubs to present.
Sign Language Readers	A guest reader signs a book while it is read by an adult or the students. Simple sign language can also be taught.
Signed Commitments for New Books	Commitments are sent home with students asking families to "Turn off the TV and Turn on to Books." For every 15 commitments returned by students with family member signatures, the school dedicates a new book to the school library in honor of those students.
Speakers' Podium	Children pick out a short story or poem to read to the audience.
Story Tellers	Some will read stories, enact stories, use music and others will have children act out stories.
Teachers' Skits	The teachers perform a skit of a favorite book/story for the students.