



Leading with Literacy Events Provided an Opportunity to Connect with the Community and Spread the Message of PTA

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Combining the essential elements of education – children, parents, schools, libraries, and books – the Urban Family Engagement Initiative of the National PTA held several successful reading circle events called Leading with Literacy this fall in Chicago.

Black Star Community PTA took the lead in helping several local parent groups on Chicago’s south and west sides to sponsor Leading with Literacy events at four libraries, attracting more than 25 children at each event. The cornerstone of the events was parents – mostly fathers – reading to young children at public libraries identified by UFEI team members in four urban communities: Austin (Austin Library); Hegewisch (Vodak Library); Englewood (Thurgood Marshall Library); and Little Village (Little Village Library). Parents and special guests read from a selection of books provided by local booksellers and UFEI.

Children listened intently to stories and later had the joy of receiving a book as a gift for their personal libraries. Events were supported by a broad range of community and business supporters, including the Chicago Children’s Museum, Chicago Alderman Roderick Sawyer and representatives of a local bank on the south side of the city.

The reading circles and book give-aways were preceded by discussions led by Illinois PTA members with parents on the importance of parental involvement in public education, as well as a presentation on the new PTA Parent Success Guides for Common Core State Standards. The literacy events were tailored to address particular issues of the communities hosting them from the announced school closings by the Chicago Public School system to the impact of early childhood literacy initiatives. The goal of the event was to provide a free opportunity for parents and children to come together for a fun family outing, encourage early literacy and the value of having a library card, while having the opportunity to create a connection to PTA that may not currently exist within their schools.



“Each event was so well received by the participants that we were asked to come back to host more events like this. The library staff, elected officials, parents and the children enjoyed the connections made through reading and wanted to see events like these happening more often. We are hopeful that by demonstrating the power of PTA through our work with UFEI local units will be inspired to replicate projects like these and continue to engage urban families in PTA.” Cynthia Flowers – Chicago UFEI Team Leader

The Chicago UFEI team is in the final year of a three year initiative designed to engage, educate and empower urban parents. Their culminating activity will be a district wide parent conference at University of Illinois Chicago on February 18, 2012. Say it Out Loud! I’m a Parent and I’m Proud: Empowering Strategies to Help Your Child and Others Succeed will be a day-long conference featuring workshops and special guest speakers including Ms. Jamiko Rose, Chief Family and Community Engagement Officer of the Chicago Public Schools and Professor Charles M. Payne author of *So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools*.



For more information on UFEI please visit http://pta.org/topic_diversity_and_inclusion.asp. To register to attend the conference please visit <https://ptaspeakers.wufoo.com/forms/z7p7k7/>.

