

Parent Assisted Learning Packets
Narrative Report
Dumas School District – Dumas, AR
Submitted by Susan Stewart

The awarding of the Parent Assisted Learning Packets grant came with great excitement in our Parent Center. For almost five years, I have been devising ways for parent to be involved with their children's education and help them with their school work. In the center, I had available over 300 different worksheets, booklets, etc. to help families. The PAL packets were something that I had dreamed of and only hoped that I could create. I am always in a brainstorming state to come up with ways to help our families. PAL packets are awesome!

The first thing we did was share the news with our community. We did this through various means: Chamber of Commerce meeting announcement, newspaper article, newsletter article and parent letter. We sent a variety of packets home with students. When students brought the Talk Back page to the center, they were given a treat, such as a pencil or bookmark. This, in turn, prompted parents to come by the center and pick up PAL packets as we approached our State Benchmark Tests. The traffic continued through The Parent Center as we approached the end of school. Since I work through June, I've had parents who thought they "missed out" drop by the center in relief to find me here, packets ready to go home!

Our third annual Family Night was held in early April. The Parent Center always has an exhibit at the event (we sponsor it and carry it out) and we were certain to have plenty of PAL packets available for parents attending the event. The event's attendance was over 350 so we feel like that was a great avenue to share PAL packets with families.

During our annual Muffins With Mom events, we made sharing the news about PAL packets a part of our welcome talk with the moms and students. Following the third grade Muffins With Mom, the mothers were lined up to get into The Parent Center. The third and fourth grade packets were literally wiped out by these eager moms. I asked for volunteers to help assemble packets and two mothers stayed and assembled everything I had run off to that point.

It took until the end of school for me to feel this way, but Central Elementary seems to be on board. The counselor and teachers were able to look at packets and when they did, they commented on how they aligned with the student learning expectations. I feel that the enthusiasm of the counselor and the teacher who made the comment will be contagious. That particular teacher requested, and I delivered, every PAL packet I had assembled for first grade students. She sent the materials home with the students at the end of Summer School on June 22.

The Parent Center displays the packets in round magazine racks that rotate. I recently, at the end of the school year, purchased another one since I had a little money left in my budget. Our 21st Century Community Learning Center also purchased one. The way I had it set up, I could display 20 different packets per grade. My new rack has 80 slots so I should be able to increase the amount of assembled packets ready and available for my parent visitors. Two

very faithful parent volunteers have been vital in copying and assembling the packets. That has been my **biggest** problem. . . getting the packets ready for everyone! These two volunteers have even been coming to my office in June. I will be off in July but I am certain they will be back to lend a helping hand in August.

One of the biggest helps from our staff has been teachers going through the PAL packet list and highlighting and marking the packets they are working on and providing dates for when they will begin other packets. That is a great help as it assures us of having packets available that relate to what the students are working on at any given time. The most enthusiastic grade in this area was second. I lost count of how many packets we distributed grade-wide for these children. These are the ones who came for the most treats and their parents were the first to call requesting more packets. The Parent Facilitator for Reed Elementary is a second grade teacher so she was enthusiastic from day one! I have found that the staff who has always been supportive of our parent involvement program seems to be the most excited about the PAL packets.

One heart-warming story regarding PAL packets came from the parent of a fourth grade girl. She came to the center wanting help for her daughter with fractions. As I visited with the parent, she told me that she did not have fractions in school because she was in resource. I sat down with her & went completely through the PAL packet dealing with fractions. She is a parent with definite limitations but truly wants to help her child.

I would like to start the year off with a big push for PAL packet distribution. If we can start the year with parental awareness of the existence and benefit of PAL packets, we can do even better.

You asked for feedback on the product and I can only say to you “don’t change a thing.” They are easy to follow, easy to assemble (just need time!) and my feedback has been completely positive. I believe that we will find more success as we see the implementation of them better at our pre-K through first school. The Reed campus has now been divided: Reed Elementary, grades 2-4 and Reed Intermediate, grades 5-6. The principal for Reed Intermediate is the new principal on the site so I will set up a meeting with her. Principal enthusiasm goes a very long way in motivating staff. She is a former literacy coach and principal in another district so I believe she will be on our team immediately.

Please let me know how else I can help your company . . . and let me know how I can do even better with PAL packets.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
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