

## Parent Testimonials After a Family Literacy Project in mid-Michigan

1. "I got my daughter involved and she did her own poem about "I Am" and she did her own cinquain. And she wrote me a letter back after I wrote her a letter. The "Becoming of You" poem, she did that, and that was really quite special. There's so much. It was great."
2. "One of my absolute favorite homework assignments, and which is something I plan to make part of a monthly routine in my home, is we wrote letters to our children. Toby mailed them from far away so when they came the children were like 'Who do I know who lives in Gaylord?' So we got to express some feelings and funny things to the kids and then the kids wrote back. And it was just a neat two-way communication. In fact, I've already done it once since we did it as a homework project. I just love that. It encourages me writing and encourages them writing."
3. "We had to write poems and just getting to know everybody. We would sit down and write stuff out and then talk to each other about it. It got me to where I got to know the teachers a lot better and the community members too. We'd write poems about our kids and talk about books and Toby would read and we'd discuss those books."
4. "It was a thrill for me because I'm not very social and that was something I looked forward to every week. Everybody came together as a group and as friends. There weren't any big 'I's' and little 'you's.'
5. "There was a line of communication with my daughter and myself that wasn't there prior to this. For instance, she would have never written me a letter and I probably wouldn't have ever thought to write her a letter and let her know some things. And she didn't know who it was from, it was quite a surprise. So there was a line of communication that wasn't there before. She got it in the mail with no return address and mailed from some place Toby sent it from. When she read it she knew who it was from. And her response was very, very nice. Thank you very much. That was the most beneficial definitely."
6. "I liked doing the poems about our children because it made you sit and think about your own kids. And then hearing other people talk about their children...it was really good."
7. "Getting in better contact with my kids. I spent a lot more time doing stuff with my kids. Being so busy and everybody doing everything – to stop and reflect how busy we are. People can really lose contact."
8. "Toby was very professional, but it wasn't all business. She made it enjoyable. We looked forward to her reading the books to us as I did my son reading it back to me. It gave us a chance to test our reading skills. How can we teach our children or make them do something as far as schoolwork and all that when we don't know it?" That was the biggest part to me. "

9. "Getting to know the teachers on a more personal level because then I got more involved in the school. My daughter had two teachers there who have had her or are currently her teacher. Again there was a line of communication that wasn't there before. When I showed up for student led conferences, and my daughter's a fairly good student, so it was kind of like, 'It was nice to meet you, I'll see you in six months.' She's a low maintenance child, as they like to call her, and she kind of gets overlooked. Between myself and the teachers, we've kind of brought that out of her because she likes to be overlooked, to sit back and not be pointed out. So it's been a lot of fun. I've also chaperoned two dances. And anything else that they need they know they can ask me to do that now.
10. "And I noticed the teachers were using some of the things that Toby would come up with. They were using cinquains in their classrooms also. I thought that was pretty cool."
11. "I think for me personally it was bridging the gap between teachers and parents. For me I think that was it. We do a lot of reading and what not at home with the little one, and the older kids read to him so we weren't really lacking in that department. But it was really nice, not only for myself to bond and get closer to the teachers and administrators of the school, but just to see all the other parents doing that. It makes you feel more comfortable to approach them if you need to. And sometimes that can be a big gap so it was nice to have something that brought us all together. "
12. "I got my son to read. My son will not read. And through this project he reads now. He's eleven and in middle school. He is the "full-on contact" kind of person. To sit down, be quiet, and read a book is impossible for him, and he does now, he found an interest. He found that there is something you can do – use your imagination. He thought reading was boring. He's interested in dinosaurs – figuring out about dinosaurs. He figures you could watch a movie and do the same thing, but books give so much more detail. And he likes fiction – fantasies. . . . I asked him. 'What do you like? . . . And he started telling me all of the stuff he likes to read. We watched the Harry Potter movies but he really liked Harry Potter. And there's a lot of stuff in the books that's not in the movies so I got him a Harry Potter book. And I got him books on dinosaurs. And I told him 'There's a lot more in a book than in a movie and you can use your imagination more.' And he likes that. But he never paid attention before to that. He thought you could get everything you were supposed to get on the TV. "

13. "I used to read to them when they were little. Then they started getting older and fidgeting and running around so we stopped doing that and they'd read their own books. When this started I sat down every night and started reading them a book again. We would just sit together and read a book. The kids were like "Mom you're reading like I'm a little kid." And then they'd start reading the book, so I said, 'Read it to me.' And next thing you know we were having a time together. We were interacting and they found it fun to be reading to me like I was the little kid and they were the mom and they liked that. And now we are still reading."
14. "I think I had some preconceived notions about some parents and it was nice just to see them in a different situation and hear their writing. I don't know how to say it, but I felt more like a parent than a teacher in the project because I have kids. We discussed that a lot, so it was being on that same ground as parents instead of just the parent teacher relationship. For example, there was one parent that I've had her daughter. I was basing my opinion of the mom on how the daughter was, just thinking that she might not take literacy seriously because her daughter didn't always take it seriously. And her writing was just incredible. She was really taking it seriously and her writing about her kids was wonderful. I wouldn't have suspected that big of a literacy push at home but there was. I would not have believed from seeing the daughter that literacy was important at home."
15. "I gave the book [that I won], which isn't really my daughter's level, it was a little under, to my sister-in-law because it really was a charming book that had you could see a lot of her family in. So, it just spreads from there. So, my daughter now is reading to her cousins... and she's also doing short amounts of babysitting with older kids like 5 and 6 years old. And she goes and reads her books to them. It's awesome."