

How I got 75 Families Speaking 14 Different Languages (*all in the same room at the same time!*) Telling Stories to Each Other— and Laughing So Hard Their Eyes Watered and Sides Ached

People are amazed when I tell them about my Family Storytelling Night® success on the Island of Saipan in February, 2007 (a great place to visit in winter, I must say!) Parents speaking **14 different languages** laughed so hard there were **tears** in their eyes (and in my eyes, too). Have you ever laughed that hard?

Put it this way – the phrase, “*A good time was had by all,*” doesn’t even come close to describing the FUN people had telling stories in Saipan!

I was *invited* by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System to train educators on parent involvement and literacy enhancement and I facilitated a **Family Storytelling Night®** for a diverse group of parents and children – who were invited by ELL/ESL specialists, adult education teachers, early childhood educators, and child-and-family program professionals.



The 14 languages spoken that night...

Chamorro	Carolinian	Trukese	Yapese
	Marshallese	Palauan	Pohnpeian
Korean	Chinese	Thai	Japanese
	Filipino	English	

“Wow! How’d You Do That?”

A **Family Literacy** and ELL program director in Denver asked me, “**How did you do that?**” For starters, I explained, the parents worked in the garment industry. (They’d come to Saipan from several countries for the work – that’s why so many languages were spoken.) Then I told her HOW I did it:

“I did what I always do at Family Storytelling Night® – *I showed families how to have FUN telling true childhood stories. It’s something I’ve learned to do well.*” (Of course, there was much more to it than that. After all, I’ve been at this for nine years... and I’ve learned some bomb-proof “systems-and-methods” and techniques that ensure success.) Saipan, I explained, was just one example of the tremendous success I, and others, have had with Family Storytelling Night®.

If I was bragging a bit, it’s because I’m exceedingly proud of Family Storytelling Night®. It really works to **get parents INVOLVED**. And it’s superb “Literacy Enhancement.”

She liked hearing about the strong “**ELL/ESL and Family Literacy**” connection, and of course the “Parent Involvement” aspect thrilled her—since she and colleagues are always on the lookout for ways to accomplish those things in her Colorado program. Do you ever seek innovative parent involvement and literacy-enhancement strategies?

Parents Are ‘*Super-Motivated*’ to Speak Their Second Language at Family Storytelling Night®

Even though only 40% of the Saipan families spoke English, *everybody* in the room **strived to find the words** (in English) to explain their “family stories.” And everyone listened all-the-more intently than they normally would...because they REALLY WANTED to hear the stories other families were telling.

That’s how it ALWAYS goes! Isn’t that interesting?

The other neat thing about the Saipan event (and all Family Storytelling Night® events I’ve done where there are English Language Learners present), is that everyone strives to speak their **best English** – their “second language” – as they really “reach” to be understood in the fun, engaging context of the evening’s storytelling.

Here’s what happens: An “*I can do this!*” mind-set fills the room, and people who are normally quiet, shy, and un-involved are READY and EAGER to tell their stories!

Parents pull out all the stops, and use as much English as they can muster. They strive with great excitement to use English (and their native language, too) to convey the meaning behind their story. And they feel a sense of REWARD when everyone “gets it” – “gets” their story. They also get to hear their story told in English, and they become the person nodding their head and smiling widely. Can you picture their enthusiasm?

What, exactly, IS Family Storytelling Night?

Family Storytelling Night® is an EVENT that’s provided



“LIVE” and “IN-PERSON” by Patrick Mitchell, Family Storytelling Night® founder Patrick Mitchell. **AND/OR** it’s provided to you as a **“KIT”** — as a ready-to-use **system of informational and physical resources** for educators and programs to use to **Get Parents Involved** and **Enhance Literacy**.

And yes – there’s **lots of “Visuals” involved** – colorful visuals for families to use and share. The visuals help everyone leap across the language barrier and have that “extra motivation to communicate” amid all those Family Storytelling Night® smiles!

Key Benefits of Family Storytelling Night®...

- Teaches a storytelling METHOD that parents can do at home – nightly, with their kids – to bolster their children’s language and literacy (and to bolster their OWN, adult literacy). Family Storytelling Night jump-starts a “storytelling tradition” in families that bolsters LITERACY and gets parents super-involved.
- Superb "**Literacy** Enhancement" (fosters individual, and family literacy)
- ELL/ESL-friendly (native English speakers and English language learners participate side-by-side in these activities; naturally, you can customize the audience as you see fit, but it’s possible to have everyone do the event together!)
- GREAT "**Parent Involvement**"
- Celebrates family history, heritage, and culture. Family Storytelling Night® is useful in meeting “cultural goals” including integration into mainstream American culture while maintaining home/heritage culture. (Teaches family history, heritage, and culture via the true stories of the parents).
- Family Storytelling Night® makes for a good “Father Involvement” (and “grandfather involvement) event, in addition to being perfectly suited for MOMS (and grandmas) too.
- It’s Adult Education friendly; in particular, with respect to English language learner adults.
- The Family Storyboards™ can have the “Native language” written on them, making the boards a form of “living history” (based on shared family experiences) as well as great language learning tools – since the stories can be TOLD in English, and yet be WRITTEN in the native language (and vice-versa).
- It's tried and tested! (I’ve done over a hundred Family Storytelling Night® events for literally THOUSANDS of families in America and internationally). I’ve gotten the “kinks” out. I KNOW what I’m doing! And I’m going to show YOU how to do it.

...Teaches a Storytelling METHOD that Gets Parents INVOLVED Telling Their Kids Stories at Home Nightly – Starting a “Storytelling Tradition” That Enhances Literacy, and Celebrates Language – Primary Language and ‘Second Language’...

Part of having parents “involved” is showing them how they can HELP their children in **literacy**. A lot of ESL/ELL parents don't necessarily have that literacy background, so any activity that gives them tools to take back and work with their kids on is valuable. Family Storytelling Night® is **a way to open the doors** and get ESL parents to your events -- and get them PARTICIPATING **at** your events -- and getting them excited about it, and INVOLVED.

Your Family Storytelling Night® activities will be EASY to implement over, and over again when you review, and apply, the “informational” components contained in the **KIT**, and when you use the **KIT** “materials” (unique *crafts* materials and other physical resources) at an initial Family Storytelling Night® event for all your families, and at subsequent events all year long.

Get the Family Storytelling Night® **KIT** for these purposes:



- Family Literacy Events
- ELL / ESL / LEP Events
- After School Programs
- Family Literacy / Adult Education “Combo” Events
- Family Nights
- Parent Involvement Nights
- “All School” Events

Family Storytelling Night® is a bit of parent involvement and literacy enhancement “magic” that I’ve perfected over the past 9 years... and I’m giving it to others, now, in the form of a “KIT” of informational resources and physical materials—the **Family Storytelling Night® KIT**. You’re invited to give it a whirl!

...And I’m going to HELP YOU every step of the way – with “Coaching” if you get the Family Storytelling Night® “KIT.” Or, I can “lead the show” if you invite me to your school or program to do this “Live,” and “In-Person.”

Order the Family Storytelling Night® **KIT** Today!

→ Go to www.DownToEarthDad.org/Get_The_Storytelling_Kit.asp

→ Or call 1-877-282-3237

→ Or send email to Patrick Mitchell at patrick@downtoearthdad.org