



## Birth to 5 Night

Belleville District #118 in Belleville, Illinois, hosted a *Birth to 5 Night* in January of this year. The *Birth to 5 Night* was planned and organized by the district's Pre-K Director and one of the Parent Educators. On this evening, all parents that live within the school district were invited to attend a free dinner and parent workshop. The event was advertised on school marquees throughout the district, in the Belleville News Democrat, by flyers that went home with all students throughout the district, and through an automated call that went out to all district families.

The event was held at one of the district's largest schools. It was advertised as dinner from 5:00-6:00 PM and workshops from 6:00-8:00 PM. At the door families registered as they entered, received a family number to be used later for babysitting purposes and then were encouraged to visit one of 20 vendors who were set up in a foyer area. Some of the vendors included: Illinois PTA, Child and Family Connections, YMCA, 0-3 Program, District Speech Teachers, and Head Start. Dinner was available in the school cafeteria: pasta bar, salad, cookies and drinks.

As 6:00 PM approached parents were directed to specific rooms that were set up for babysitting. There were three rooms designated for newborns and 1 year olds, a gymnasium for 2- and 3-year old children, three rooms assigned for 4, 5, 6 and 7-year-old children and the computer lab was used for the older siblings, children 8 and over. Toys, movies and supplies were set up in each room. Over 75 individuals volunteered on this evening to help with cooking, serving food, clean up, and babysitting. Most volunteers were District #118 teachers or Americorps Members. When parents dropped children off to their assigned rooms, they signed in with their family number so volunteers knew which parents/family belonged to what children.

Parents then attended a series of workshops in the other gymnasium. The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum presented first to parents on Behavior Management in the home. The second speaker was the Pre-K Director/Principal who spoke on Pre-Reading Strategies and what parents need to do at home to prepare for their children for Kindergarten. The last speaker was from Child and Family Connections and spoke about milestones children should meet and what parents needed to do if a child did not meet those milestones.



At the end of the workshop, parents were given a folder with resources from all three speakers as well as resources to use at home to help prepare their children for Kindergarten (letter cards, number cards, color, shapes, handwriting paper to practice writing their name, etc.) \$500 worth of educational toys was given out to families as well as school supplies. The District also ran two vans to transport families to the event who did not have transportation.

This is the second time Belleville District #118 has held a Birth to 5 Night. This year over 55 families were in attendance with over 180 individuals.