



The PARP Toolkit

Section 2

Programs &

Activities

New York State
PTA[®]
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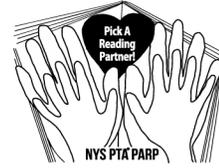


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Publicity and Public Relations for PARP Programs

Public relations begin in the school, library or community center sponsoring a PARP program. All staff members should be made aware of the program and its related activities before the first announcement is released. The staff should be involved in planning the program and sharing responsibility for it.

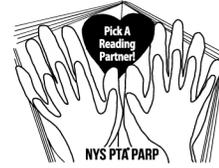
Publicity might include letters, posters, exhibits, bulletin boards, fliers, and book displays. In order to reach the largest audience, it's important to incorporate social media and technology (website, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) into these standard methods of publicity. Letters, posters and flyers can be shared electronically as attachments (e.g., pdf or jpg). Photographs of exhibits, bulletin boards and displays will attract attention in social media posts. By using technology, the PARP team can share news with families in real time and keep them engaged.

A school may send information home with the children, communicate to families via email, and promote the program on social media. A public library or community center may ask the school to spread the word too. Parent/family organizations and youth groups should receive information on the program and, wherever possible, participate in its distribution. Newsletters are effective for sharing information before and after PARP programs. During PARP, news can be quickly sent to families using email and social media.

Contact local newspapers and radio/television stations to find out the requirements for news releases (content, format and lead-time); adhere to their guidelines. An accurate, concise summary in the lead paragraph followed by details and/or background information in subsequent paragraphs is a good rule of thumb. Include the dates, a contact name and telephone number for reporters who seek further data. Discern the newsworthy events and gear your releases toward the medium you are contacting: for example, a book costume parade will be more relevant for television coverage than an awards assembly. For a major event, you may wish to follow up your release with a telephone call closer to the date itself.

By law, both radio and television stations must devote a certain amount of air space to public service announcements (commercials for non-profit organizations) without charge. A station, however, may choose to reject an individual Public Service Announcement (PSA). Contact local radio or television stations for help in planning and preparing a PSA.

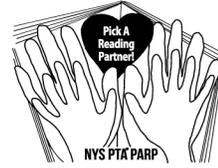
Some local newspapers may take a press release and photos submitted by PTA and use that for their article. Find out what your local media outlets require and prefer.



Maintaining Interest and Motivation

Choose a theme for your PARP program. It sets the foundation for your ideas, activities and events. Your theme adds fun and generates excitement about PARP. Keep students and families engaged by making your PARP program interactive.

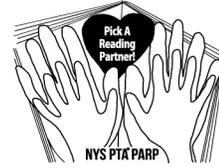
- Hold a Kick-off Assembly or Family Night event.
- Make it easy for families to participate in PARP by putting together a packet of materials with everything they need to get started.
- Use decorations and interactive displays to bring books to life and track reading progress. Get students involved: Invite them to illustrate a scene from a story and hang their art throughout the school.
- Author visits can also help. Make the most of the visit by incorporating the author's work into your PARP program so students become familiar with the author. (Note: These visits usually have a cost affiliated with them so you can work with your Arts-in-Education committee to see if they can cover the cost through their budget.)
- Children can create their own books. Book reports, diagrams and storytelling activities also encourage students to read more.
- Before PARP begins, ask students for book recommendations. Share their suggestions during PARP to encourage their classmates to read.
- Teach songs or poems to students or have them write their own. This will help get the whole school involved (e.g., the music department) and will foster the reading-writing connection.
- Dress-up days are also popular. Students and/or faculty come to school dressed as their favorite storybook characters and a parade may be held. This may attract attention of local media.
- Hold a book drive to collect gently used books and let students choose a "new" book from the collection. Students can make posters and give announcements at school to publicize the drive. They can also help collect and sort the books.
- Share daily PARP news with students over the announcements. You can talk about your theme, describe your decorations, build anticipation for PARP events, and give updates on reading progress. Choose students to help read the PARP announcements.



- Use social media to bring PARP home to families. Share the daily PARP announcements and pictures on Facebook. At the end of the week, send an email with PARP highlights and links to the Facebook posts.
- Contests for poster and button designs can be held, centering on the theme.
- Local officials, school personnel and community members can be asked to read to classes.
- Involve the public library in the school's program (or the school with the library's program) providing another reminder to the community.
- PARP activity books may be prepared and sent home with reading games that students can enjoy.
- Hold a Celebration Assembly or Family Night at the conclusion of the formal program.

There are many colorful and creative ideas that can be used to motivate continued participation in PARP. All can be fun and will prove just how enjoyable reading is!

The following pages have samples of items that have been used in different programs.



PARP Incentives

PARP incentives are a great way to encourage participation. Incentives can be anything from “Principal For A Day” to a small gift, such as a bookmark, a pencil or a sticker, to keep program costs low. You can ask for donations from area merchants and ask the Book Fair committee to give you any “free” books they receive.

Providing weekly incentives allows for flexibility and rewards children who may not be able to participate in the full program. Many programs that return calendars each week may give small incentives weekly. Others give a small incentive to the class or grade that read the most in a given week. Awards are presented in the classroom, library or community center at the end of each week and/or at an assembly at the end of the program.

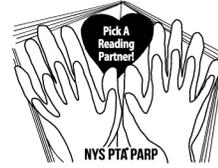
A certificate can be presented to all who complete the program. A sample PARP certificate is available in Section 3A of this toolkit. You can design your own or order certificates through a book company. Certificates can also be used to recognize classroom, grade level and school reading achievements. In addition to a certificate, you may want to present a book, t-shirt or similar prize. A PARP trophy can be awarded to the class or the grade level that read the most. Like the Stanley Cup, the PARP trophy can circulate each year.

PARP Assemblies

PARP assemblies are important to spark enthusiasm at the beginning of the program and can serve to maintain the attention of the participants until the end. These assemblies are often set to the theme of the program and may involve refreshments or “bring a dish” dinners.

Assemblies may be held during school or in the evening at your school, library or community center. Your PARP assembly should be organized and fun! It may involve skits or songs written by educators, students or members of your community. Some assemblies feature authors, storytellers, school administration or elected officials. These people may assist in presenting awards if the assembly marks the end of a PARP program.

At the beginning of your PARP program, assemblies are the time to introduce students to PARP, announce the theme, and build excitement around PARP activities. If you will host an author visit, this is a good opportunity to read a book to give students a preview of the author’s work. Your assembly is the perfect time to introduce your PARP mascot, if you have one. Keep the momentum going at home by handing out PARP materials like parent/family letters, calendars, and small gifts.



At the end of your PARP program, assemblies are the time to present awards to the children who participated. These awards may give the children an incentive to keep reading, with the hope that they will soon read from habit rather than for a prize.

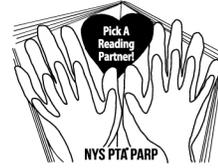
Many assemblies include printed programs listing the names of award winners and/or the words to a PARP song, so that others may sing along. This makes a nice keepsake for parents to retain.

If you are bringing in a program that costs money (and may not have the budget to do so), consider coordinating with the Arts-in-Education committee to see if they want to coordinate and bring in a relevant program during PARP but that can go into their budget.

PARP Decorations

PARP decorations bring books to life, support the PARP theme, and keep students excited about reading. There are many ways to carry your PARP program throughout the school.

- Display a banner with your PARP theme in the school lobby.
- Create a welcome sign to greet the visiting author.
- Use a large visual display to track reading progress. It can be a simple chart (e.g., thermometer) that you color as students move toward their reading goal. You could make a reusable pocket chart scoreboard to track reading minutes. Be creative and create a display that complements your theme.
- Choose several books associated with your PARP theme (e.g., visiting author's work) and design decorations to bring the books to life. You could recreate the book cover, draw a life-sized version of the main character, or make a display of an object that represents the book (e.g., a treasure chest for a pirate story). Help students make the connection between the decoration and the book by hanging posters with story excerpts near the display.
- Make interactive lift-the-flap posters to engage students and teach them about the books featured in PARP.
- Before PARP, ask students for book recommendations. Then hang posters with their suggestions throughout the building to encourage reading.



PARP Family Night

As mentioned above, you may kickoff your program with an evening event, such as a PARP Family Night. You may also want to plan a PARP Family Day/Night event in the middle or at the conclusion of your program. You can hold this event on the weekend or during the week in the evening. PARP Family Night is a great way to bring children and parents together. Here are a few ideas for a PARP Family Day/Night:

Auction (students can auction off paperbacks with play money)

Authors/Illustrators Night

Battle of the Books

Book Bingo

Book Fair

Book Hunt

Book Swap Night

Book Theme Party

Children as Authors

Joke Jamboree

Library Card Night

Library Sleep-over

Pajama Night

Prime Time Nite

Read Aloud Luncheon/Picnic

Readers' Theater/Books Alive

Read-ins

Reading Carnival

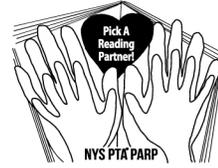
- Bowling
- Check out a Good Book (wear checks)
- Jeopardy
- Reading Jogs the Mind (wear sweats)
- Riddles
- Sock it to Reading (wear crazy socks)
- Spin-A-Round
- Spot a Good Book (wear polka dots)
- Ring Toss
- T-off to Reading (wear T-shirts)
- Tic Tac Toe
- Wheel of Fortune

Reading Pep Rally

Scavenger Hunt

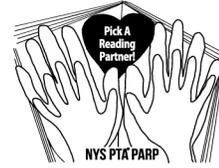
Storytelling Festival

Used Book Fair



Additional Activities

Book Blurbs
Book Buddies
Book Character Dress Up Day
Book Pen Pals
Book Swap Days
Cold Turkey Week – TV Turn Off
D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything and Read) Time
Design a Bookmark
Design Buttons
Favorite Character Day
Grandparents Day
Library Card Day
Newspaper Day
Poster Day
Readers' Choice Awards
Reading Posters
Reading Spirit Day
Research Day
Slip Into Reading (wear slippers)
Who Are You?



Book Fairs

Book fairs are a must for a successful program. Children should have the opportunity to purchase or receive a book during your program. Having a book fair is the perfect opportunity to make this happen.

Contact your local book vendor or bookstore to see how to set this up. You can either have the events at your school, library or local community center, or at the local book store. This could be used as a fundraising event to raise the money for your PARP program, or just as an opportunity for children to purchase books at cost. NOTE: Non-profit organizations act as an agent for the book vendor or book store and never owns the merchandise; therefore, sales tax must be remitted in New York State. Refer to the *NYS PTA Resource Guide*, Section 5 – Finance and Insurance, Tax Information for the correct procedures. The *Resource Guide* is available on our website, at www.nyspta.org.

Make sure that the book vendor or bookstore is aware of your PARP theme. Ask them to provide books or a suggested list of books related to your theme. Providing the children with books or book lists will help expand what children normally choose to read, and in the process teach them something new.

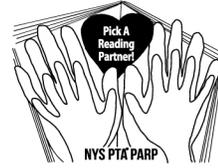
Some book vendors may have character costumes that you may borrow during your book fair. This could be the mascot for your PARP program. Get a volunteer to dress-up during your book fair and help children choose books.

Some bookstores will have the event at their store where children and parents can go to purchase books at a discounted rate, or as a fundraiser for the organization. This may be a one-day event or a month-long event. Your local bookstores may also be willing to sponsor a pajama night at their location, where children will come in their pajamas and participate in reading activities. Either way, work with the bookstore to make this a fun experience for the children.

A book fair does not have to be the sale of new books. It can also include the sale of used books. Ask for donations of used books from parents, teachers, administrators and community members. Also, contact book companies for donations. Plan this event the same way you would plan a new book sale.

Alternately, you could hold a used book drive at school, and then let students choose a free book from the collection.

Just giving children the opportunity to choose a book they want to read will make your PARP book fair a success!



Forming Book Clubs for Young Adults

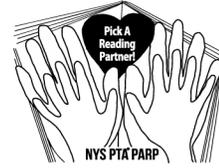
One exciting PARP activity for young adults can be a book club. Book clubs can entice young adults to read together and to be engaged. Parents and families can help in forming the book club in your school, library or community center with the young adults helping to decide how and what they will read.

A book club, also referred to as a reading group, is a collection of people who decide to read the same book and then get together to talk about it. Book clubs are becoming very popular among young adults. They are easy and can be fun!

If your school, library or community does not have a book club for young adults, creating one at the beginning of your PARP program is the perfect opportunity to get started. An actual PARP program for middle or high school young adults could also be just forming a book club and asking parents to participate with their young adults in reading the chosen books. Remember, a successful PARP program is encouraging parents to read with their young adults for at least 15 minutes a day.

Here are some easy steps to follow in forming a young adult book club:

- Eight to twelve young adults is a good size for a book club. Since not all young adults will be able to make each club meeting, a maximum size of twelve is a good size for good conversations on the book.
- Before starting the book club, it is important to decide what kind of book club you wish to form. You may want to form an all-boys or all-girls book club since boys and girls have different interests in books. You may want to form a mystery, fiction, non-fiction or fantasy book club. Choose the direction for the book club first and see what kind of interest you get from the young adults.
- Although book clubs should be fun, it is important to set rules for your clubs. The young adults may want to choose a leader who will keep track of the books they read and send reminder notices of meetings and activities to the group.
- The leader of the club should keep a consistent calendar of meeting dates, which will allow for a definite schedule for the book club to follow. With the busy schedules that most young adults have this will help them to become regular and on time book club members.
- It is important that the book club decides in the beginning how they will be choosing the books to be read and how many times a week or month they would be meeting.
- The book club should also decide on who will be leading the discussions and activities. The young adults may choose one person for this job in the beginning until they get the hang of it and, thereafter, they may want to take turns. The book club may decide that



the person who chooses the book starts the book discussion and each member brings a few questions of their own. Some book clubs have a different leader of the discussion each time they change chapters of books, or change books, so everyone learns how to lead the discussion, as well as listen and participate in both roles.

- Parents, families, teachers, educators, administrators, librarians and other community members should be there to lead or assist the young adults in this process in the beginning. The biggest problem that most book clubs encounter is staying focused on the task at hand. The young adults may need help on how to stay focused on the book and not side conversations.

The only way to ensure a successful book club is if the young adults who participate in a book club are dedicated to reading the books, coming to the meetings and participating in the book conversations. A sample book club activity can be found in Section 3B – Sample Activities.

At the School:

A book club could take place during school or after school as an extracurricular club. Most middle and high schools have a reading program incorporated in their curriculum. Talk to the principal or English chair to ascertain what kind of reading program your school has. Some reading programs require students to read certain books and take a test after they have read the book. When forming your book club, you may want to consider those types of books. During school, you may want to form a book club during the young adult's lunch period. Check with your principal to see if this is possible. After school is also a great time for young adults to gather to form a book club. The book club could meet weekly to discuss a few chapters or monthly to discuss the entire book.

At the Library:

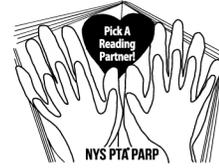
One of the greatest resources for books is the school or local librarian. The librarian knows the current selection of books and what is age appropriate for young adults. Forming a book club at the library will give young adults the opportunity to explore books in a different way. Young adults will be able to use the resources available at your library.

Book club meetings could occur once a month at the library. The librarian can help formulate questions and activities for the young adults participating regarding the selected book. The library is always willing to help!

At the Community Center:

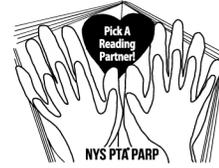
The local community center is another place where you can form a book club for young adults. You may want to form an adult and young adult program, where both the young adults and their parents participate in the book club together.

When choosing the books to read for your book club, make sure that you leave adequate time between meetings for the members to complete the book or chapters. Providing good snacks can also be the key to a successful book club.



Steps to Planning a Successful Artist, Author/Illustrator or Performer Event

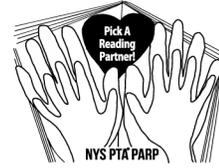
1. Start planning at least six (6) months in advance – be sure you have sufficient money budgeted.
2. Discuss day(s) and date(s) with the principal, library facilitator or community center director and staff. Think about the best date(s), time(s) and location(s).
3. Decide on the audience – i.e. preschool, elementary, middle or high school children.
4. Select an artist, author/illustrator or performer – you may want to select several names since your first choice might not be available.
5. Contact the artist, author/illustrator or performer. What will they do at each session? Teach classes? Conduct workshops? Give a presentation or performance? How long is the presentation or performance? Or will they be on a panel with other speakers?
6. Make the artist's, author/illustrator's or performer's travel arrangements and hotel accommodations, if necessary.
7. Make an outline of the day's schedule – be sure to schedule time for breaks in between presentations or performances.
8. Send the artist, author/illustrator or performer a detailed schedule before the event.
9. If there will be a book or CD signing, order books or CDs well in advance, and publicize them.
10. Publicize the event. Prepare flyers and posters to hang and distribute at meetings. Use email and social media (e.g., Facebook) to tell families and the community about the event.
11. Send reminders about times of presentations and book or CD purchasing the day before the event.
12. See if the librarian can set up a display of the author/illustrator's books, or the materials provided by the artist and performers, to read and discuss them with the students before the event. Consider planning your PARP theme around the visiting author's work to introduce students to the author and prepare them for a successful visit.
13. Look online for information about the artist, author/illustrator or performer so students become familiar with him/her.
14. Plan meals, if required. Would he/she or they like to eat lunch with the students, teachers, the PTA or alone? Do they have any special food restrictions/preferences?



15. Make sure to provide equipment the artist, author/illustrator or performer requested.
16. Involve the faculty, staff and the community – set up a hospitality committee to take care of them (pick up and drop off artist, author/illustrator or performer during the day).
17. Have someone prepared to introduce them in an enthusiastic and knowledgeable manner.
18. If the author/illustrator will sign books, put a slip of paper in each book with the child's name on it, to prevent spelling errors, and schedule time for each child to present their book to the author/illustration for signing. You may want to do the same thing for artists or performers who sell CDs.
19. See that the event or visit is kept on schedule – have someone ready to escort the artist, author/illustrator or performer to the next presentation and to facilitate the CD or book signing.
20. Be sure that the honorarium or fee is available for the artist, author/illustrator or performer at the end of the event or visit, unless other arrangements have been made.
21. Make them feel welcome!

Questions to Ask an Artist, Author/Illustrator or Performer

1. When is the best time to call you?
2. How long is each presentation or performance?
3. How many presentations or performances are you comfortable doing?
4. What will you do at each session? Teach classes? Conduct Workshops? Give a presentation or performance? Will you be on a panel with other speakers?
5. What is your maximum audience size?
6. What equipment, set-up or special needs do you have?
7. Would you like to eat lunch with the students, teachers and/or the PTA or alone?
8. Do you have any special food restrictions/preferences?
9. Will you be spending the night? If so, where do you prefer to stay?
10. Can you discuss your fee on the telephone or would you prefer to mail the information?
11. Will you sign books or CDs during your stay?
12. Would you be willing to donate books or CDs to our PARP Program or our library?



Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

1. How do you invite an artist, author/illustrator or performer to your school?

Answer: The process varies. Many artists, authors/illustrators or performers have email capabilities on their web sites and welcome inquiries. Make a list of your favorite artists, author/illustrators or performers and do a search on your computer using their name. Check with your local librarian, book stores, community center or local BOCES for a current list of artists, author/illustrators or performers who visit schools

2. What if there are no authors in my area?

Answer: Some artists, authors/illustrators and performers are willing to travel great distances in order to visit schools.

3. How far in advance should we plan an artist, author/illustrator or performer visit or event?

Answer: Some artists, authors/illustrators or performers are scheduled a year or more in advance, and others are more flexible. A one-year lead time is a good idea, although it doesn't hurt to ask if you need someone sooner.

4. What will it cost?

Answer: Fees vary and usually depend upon details of the visit. Most artists, authors/illustrators or performers have an established fee; however, many of these can be negotiated. Travel, meals and hotel expenses may not be included in their honorarium or fee and can be typically paid for by the hosts.

5. Do you have a specific date in mind?

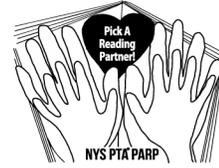
Answer: It is easier to book an artist, author/illustrator or performer, if they know your event dates are secure.

6. Do you have a specific event?

Answer: Artists, authors/illustrators or performers prefer having the most information on what the purpose of their presentation will be.

7. Define the audience? Who are they?

Answer: Most artists, authors/illustrators or performers need to know whether the audience will be students (grades/ages), teachers or librarians and how many will be attending the presentation or performance.



8. How many presentations or performances should the artist, author/illustrator or performer be asked to make?

Answer: Most artists or authors/illustrators will make up to three presentations per day. Performers will make up to two. Anything more is exhausting.

9. Are other schools, libraries, or bookstores interested in joining you in hosting the artist, author/illustrator or performer?

Answer: If so, this might defer some of the expenses (fee, honorarium and travel cost).

10. Should we have a signed contract with the artist, author/illustrator or performer?

Answer: Yes. Unless the artist, author/illustrator or performer provides a written contract, prepare one including dates, fees, equipment, grade levels, number of presentations or performances, number of students expected at presentations or performance, and any other details of importance to you or the artist, author/illustrator or performer. Do not vary from this contract without notifying the artist, author/illustrator or performer well in advance. Contact the PTA President or Region Director for a sample contract. Be aware that PTA contracts must be signed by the PTA President.

11. How can we ensure the success of our artist, author/illustrator or performer visit or event?

Answer: The single most important thing is to prepare the students. Students who have heard of or read the author/illustrator's books, seen the artist work or heard about the performer will be eager to meet and question their visitor.

12. Should we be familiar with the artists, authors/illustrators or performers before extending an invitation?

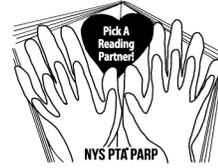
Answer: Yes. Discuss any problems before plans for the visit or event are finalized.

13. Will you be required to host a book or CD signing?

Answer: If you are, consider: 1) the number of books or CDs to order, 2) when the signing will take place, and 3) how the books or CDs will be obtained for the signing.

14. What kind of follow-up should we have?

Answer: Thank-you notes from students and teachers are always appreciated. It is nice to have acknowledgment that the visit or event was well received. Some artists,



authors/illustrators or performers value a letter from a librarian, teacher or principal that can serve as a reference for future engagements.

Program Wrap-Ups

It is important to thank everyone who has been involved for their voluntary efforts. In a letter to parents and community members, be sure to stress the importance of continuing to read, even after the program has ended. Express appreciation to the administration, teachers, community members and volunteers who contributed to the program. This will encourage them to participate again.

It is helpful to prepare a survey to provide you with ideas for improving the program for the following year. Consider using an online survey format (e.g., Survey Monkey) to make it quick and easy for people to participate. You can have three separate surveys for students, parents and teachers.

Things to consider asking:

- What worked? What didn't? What improvements could be made? What did they like best and least? Suggestions for next year.
- Ask parents what would have made things easier for them.
- Ask teachers if it was too much extra work for them.
- Ask students for ideas for next year's theme.