Family Literacy Nights: A View from a Student Teacher

Andrew Bergmeier - Kansas State University

During my student teaching experience at Fort Riley Elementary in1st grade, I had the opportunity to participate in a Family Literacy Night, which became one of the most meaningful activities I was involved in. It was a great reminder that when schools bring families, students, and teachers together with a joint purpose, good things happen. Inviting families into the school and giving them simple, practical ways to support reading at home felt like a win for everyone involved.

Going into the night, my goal was straightforward: make reading feel fun, approachable, and something families could carry with them beyond the event. I wanted the activity, "Reading Rock Buddy Station," to be engaging for children and realistic for guardians to replicate at home. That mindset guided how I planned my station, from the setup and materials to the overall feel.

I helped facilitate a "Reading Rock Buddy Station" for kindergarten and 1st grade students. Students and their families decorated small rocks that would serve as reading companions, something they could keep by their bed as a reminder to read each night. It was a simple idea, but it gave students something tangible to connect to their reading routine, which made the activity feel more personal. For early readers, consistency and positive reading routines are important because they help build fluency, vocabulary, and confidence. When reading becomes part of a nightly habit, students begin to associate books with comfort, routine, and success rather than frustration. Creating that connection early can have a lasting effect on their literacy development.

I tried to keep the environment calm and welcoming. Students were free to be creative with their rocks, and my station played soft music in the background to keep things relaxed. Throughout the night, I read various children's books aloud to small groups and encouraged families to converse about books they enjoy. These interactions added up and helped create real connections.
One moment that stuck with me was when a parent sat beside their child at my station and asked them to explain why they chose certain colors for their reading rock. The student smiled and said, "Because blue helps me slow down." That simple exchange reminded me that literacy is not always about the book itself, but about the conversations and comfort that surround it. Seeing that interaction helped

me understand how family involvement can shape a child's relationship with reading.

What stood out to me most was how much families appreciated being included in the activities. They made the importance of being involved in their child's learning very apparent. Many students were excited to name their rock buddy and talked about how they were going to use it at home, which showed me the activity stuck with them.

Looking back, the experience further proved to me that literacy development reaches far beyond the classroom. When families are invited into that process, students obtain not only reading practice, but encouragement, accountability, and connection. They do not need to be complicated, but they should be intentional and help connect learning at school with reading at home. The Reading Rock Buddy Station was simple but effective: it made reading more fun, more personal, and more consistent, which was exactly the goal.

Author Bio: Andrew Bergmeier (abergmeier@ksu.edu) is the Recruitment Coordinator for the College of Education at Kansas State University in Manhattan, KS. He earned his bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Kansas State University in May 2025 and completed his student teaching at Fort Riley Elementary School, where this family literacy experience took place. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in College Student Development.