



Reading Odyssey

The da Vinci Academy, Academy School District 20

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Odyssey Elementary, a Title I school in District 49, launched the Reading Odyssey program to ignite a passion for reading and to strengthen family literacy. This year they partnered with [*One School, One Book*](#) to bring *Life According to Og the Frog* by Betty G. Birney into the school. The program aimed to bridge the home-school connection and build a community of readers where reading is valued, celebrated, and accessible.

The program was spearheaded by Odyssey's dedicated Academic Committee, led by the Librarian and Family Liaison. The team included a teacher from each grade level, staff from each department, and an administrator. A student leadership group of ten 5th graders led most of the Kick-Off Assembly and activities during the culminating Literacy Night event. Teachers also provided support including daily classroom slides, created by the Academic Team, featuring engaging questions and vocabulary; and planned activities related to the book.

To build excitement, morning announcements included clues revealing information about the book. The Kick-Off Assembly featured student leaders perched on a "lily pad" in the center of the gym. Students shared what they loved about reading, went over the clues from the week, and even led a flash mob when the book was revealed. Books were handed out to each student before beginning the first chapter together.



Students took home a packet with a frog bookmark, reading calendar, family reading tips, and activities. Additional packets were sent home throughout the program. The Academic team built a [*comprehensive Google site*](#) with recorded chapters read by community members, including high schoolers, district employees, and staff. This was implemented to ensure all students could access a read-aloud of each chapter. The site included resources to support reading comprehension, including weekly reading-related activities to do at home and an interactive section to Read with Og, Draw with Og, and Sing and Dance with Og. All materials were translated into Spanish, including books, parent packets, the Google site, and recorded chapters.

The Reading Odyssey concluded with the Family Literacy Night. Activities included a 5 senses exploration, frog life cycles, a low sensory space, Sphero races, a poetry slam, virtual habitat exploration on zSpace computers, mossarium (a moss terrarium) building, and a trivia challenge. The organization and staffing required for Family Literacy Night was considerable. However, the way activities were structured fostered meaningful connections and interactions between families and staff.

The program's success was evaluated through student participation, teacher feedback, and parent surveys collected via iPads at the Family Literacy Night. Challenges included ensuring equitable access to technology for all families and coordinating the diverse activities for the culminating event. The program's effectiveness was demonstrated by overwhelmingly positive feedback and not only increased family engagement, but also led to new patterns in student library checkouts. Student interest dramatically increased in reading non-fiction about amphibians as well as seeking out chapter books and picture books related to characters in *Og the Frog*.

Recommendations are to start with a passionate team and prioritize accessibility. The key is to make it engaging and inclusive for everyone. Focus on building community and celebrating reading.