



### School Spotlight

# Southside Elementary: Building a Family Literacy Night

Southside Elementary in Hopkins County, Kentucky, is a Title I school serving more than 500 K–5 students, 76% of whom are economically disadvantaged. In a rural community where many face barriers to access and opportunity, the school takes a whole-child approach, prioritizing both academic growth and strong partnerships with caregivers, while continually seeking new ways to strengthen those connections.

Instructional leader Sarah Buchanan works alongside the school librarian, principal, and family resource coordinator to lead this work. Together, this team launched a hands-on family literacy night where families built bookshelves, received books, and learned how to use Beanstack. The event sparked immediate excitement, drawing hundreds of families and leading to a surge in home reading.

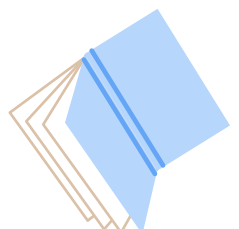


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I really think anything we can do to create opportunities and foster family engagement can change the trajectory of our students' lives.

**Sarah Buchanan**

Instructional Leader, Southside Elementary



## Planning a Family Literacy Night to Engage

Southside's family literacy night was designed as a hands-on, welcoming experience that made literacy accessible for all families, especially those who may not typically attend school events. Grounded in [TNTP's Opportunity Myth](#) research, the team focused on shifting from traditional, one-way communication to building authentic partnerships with families.

- **Hands-on experience:** Families built bookshelves, reinforcing the idea of "building literacy" at home.
- **Take-home libraries:** Each student received at least five books, with more than 870 books distributed.
- **Clear goals:** Increase access to books, build trust with families, and create an inclusive reading culture where every student can participate.

## Introducing Beanstack to Connect School and Home Reading

A key element of Southside's approach was embedding Beanstack directly into the event to ensure families could engage immediately.

- **In-person onboarding:** Staff walked families through downloading and setting up the Beanstack app during the event.
- **Accessible entry point:** Families who may not engage with written communication received direct, hands-on support.
- **Immediate participation:** Students and families left ready to log reading minutes at home.

## Sustaining Engagement

To sustain momentum, Southside paired ongoing engagement strategies with strong community partnerships and intentional planning.

- **"Taco 'Bout Reading" challenge:** A local restaurant partnership provided free meal incentives for students who met reading goals, generating excitement and encouraging participation at home.
- **Blended funding sources:** Community Schools grant funding, Title I funds, and Family Resource Center funding supported books, materials, and event implementation.
- **Strong communication and collaboration:** Multiple communication channels and shared leadership across staff ensured families felt informed, supported, and included.



### 300+ Attendees

Since the event, there have been 390+ new Beanstack registrations.



### 870+ Books Shared

Each family left with a home library to fill their new bookshelf.



### Culture Shift

Students talking about books and families are more engaged.

## Conclusion

At Southside Elementary, building a reading culture is about more than launching a program, it's about creating experiences that families can take home with them. Through their family literacy night and engagement strategies, students didn't just receive books, they gained a sense of ownership and pride in their reading. As one student shared while carrying his new bookshelf home, "This is my favorite thing in my house." By making reading accessible and family-centered, Southside is helping shift students' trajectories — building habits, confidence, and engagement that support long-term success.