

**Mark Twain Elementary School
Brentwood, Missouri
Grades K–5**

Families Program

Mark Twain Elementary organized its Families program in order to bring Kindergarten through fifth-grade students together. Mark Twain “Families” consist of 14 to 16 students and two staff members, who meet once a month. Each Family watches a short movie clip produced in association with the US Department of Education, Georgia Department of Education, and the Center for Film Enhanced Education. These clips target a character trait such as responsibility, perseverance, or honesty. Staff members are provided with an overview and possible discussion points for each session. At meetings, each multi-aged Family is encouraged to share personal experiences inspired by the clip they watch. One such clip, from the 1993 children’s film *The Sandlot* showed the main character standing up to a bully, allowing students to discuss relevant personal situations in a supportive environment. These groups took “family portraits,” created “family names” and even secret “family handshakes.” The strong bonds the students developed transcended age groups and gave them adults and peers whom they could trust.

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