Seven Key Strategies Learned from Building Banyan Events

1. **An intergenerational audience is possible and welcomed.**
   You can do family-friendly readings with common denominators: Short readings. Poetry works well. One juicy scene. Make it interactive. Adapt longer readings for stage. Humor! 3-4 minutes per person. Schedule the event in the afternoon when babies, kids, and elders can attend.

2. **Have activity tables & an Asian Am book library for the kids.**
   Our volunteers bring left-over Asian Am activities from other workshops and classes they’ve run, or extras from parties, markers and crayons, baybayin letters, origami, paper kites. We also have a book nook with pillows. Give clear directions at the opening of the event so that families know where the activity tables and bathrooms are. Tell kids they can move mindfully from seating to the tables out of respect for authors.

3. **Don’t get stuck on readings being quiet, still, or static events.**
   Allow for movement, allow for parents and young families to be able to move in and out of the space. Even if some of the readings are serious, the event doesn’t have to be. Tell personal stories. Remember to highlight beauty, wonder, & community power. When appropriate, bring in humor.

4. **Involve young authors of all ages.**
   Have kids read their original works. During community dialogue, encourage kids to ask authors questions directly. Answer honestly. They really want to know. These are tomorrow’s creators.
5. **Ditch the brie and wine. Feed the crowd home snacks.** The food we served signaled the event was family friendly, Asian American, and was a draw to our events. Samosas. Pancit. Rice. Gyozas. Don’t have a big budget? Make it a volunteer potluck with trusted core organizers bringing snacks. Ask if the venue can chip in drinks, plates, utensils, etc.

6. **Have a sign-up sheet** to help build your “audience”—in other words, your multiracial, intergenerational reading community. Gather names, email addresses, Instagram.

7. **Believe in your organization’s mission.** New venues and booksellers may question and doubt your approach. Remember: Once you start bringing in larger audiences and book buyers than they’re used to, no one will question your next event. If they do, move to a new venue or bookseller. You’re creating community and a market where one didn’t exist before. Work with venues and booksellers who will respect the collaboration.

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