

Math Trade Show

*Buffalo Public School #82 – Early Childhood Center
Buffalo, New York*

Encouraging parents and children to practice math skills at home can be a tough task. Numbers may not seem like fun on their own and workbook problems can be daunting. But after Buffalo Public School #82's Math Trade Show last fall, which featured math games with simple products found at home, more families and students bought into the idea.

Math teachers at School #82 struggled to find ways to encourage children to practice math at home. Another challenge was to increase parent participation beyond homework helper. Teachers knew that interactive math games were one way to promote math learning at home, but good games were hard to find and they could be expensive!

One math teacher drew on her past experience working at business trade shows to develop a new activity for School #82. The teacher remembered the events as stimulating and lively, and she thought that the PreK-4th grade students would like them as well. She asked various vendors to showcase a variety of common household items that could be used for some simple math games. Next teachers recruited a group of 12 students, representative of all grade levels, to learn the games (such as Make 7, Block 'n Roll, Mastermind, and others). Students were trained in how to conduct the games and instructed to arrive at the school an hour before the start of Math Trade Show.

Administrators advertised the Math Trade Show through a series of fliers sent to the families before the event. The first flier went home one month before the trade show, followed by a two-week reminder and then a final notification the day before the event.

On the night of Math Trade Show, conveniently scheduled at the beginning of the holiday season, about 250 students and 200 parents entered the school gymnasium to peruse the vendors' goods. In the middle of the room at another series of tables, the 12 student

volunteers demonstrated how to play the math games. Then, the parents played the games with their students, once they understood the rules.

Many parents took the time between games to place orders for the featured items. Others explored the display products, which were sold at a steep discount. Door prizes were awarded. To make the event even more lively, the school held an ice cream social across the hall from the trade show. Parents and students ducked in and out between games to indulge in a couple licks of cool creamy scoops.

By the end of the evening, all involved agreed that the Trade Show had been a major success. "Very well organized and unusually well run," the vendor said.

"What a great night! We had so many parents attending," an administrator said.

"This was so much fun!" a parent said.

Because the vendors donated their services, there was no cost to School #82 for conducting the event. The school plans to expand the Math Trade Show next year. They are working to secure more vendors to participate.

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