
FAMILY MATH: INTERACTIVE MONTHLY PROJECTS

Deep Run Elementary School Elkridge, Maryland

Scores on standardized math tests and state tests were not increasing as steadily as test scores in reading and writing. As part of the School Improvement Team, the Math Committee set the goal of improving family and community connections to enhance math performance. The Math Committee, consisting of a representative from every grade, met monthly to develop a curriculum-linked math activity that families could do together at home. The purpose was to show students how math exists in all parts of their lives, not just in school.

The Math Committee chose an activity that families could complete together that incorporated the math objectives for all grade levels for a given month. Teachers distributed 650 copies of each four-page activity packet, which included a letter encouraging families to participate. Each math teacher discussed the activities with his or her class. The math projects were also advertised in the school's weekly newsletter.

Families worked over the month to complete the project. Activities included measuring household items, creating symmetrical pictures, finding the area and perimeter of items, and creating pictures with tangrams. The idea was to use what was learned in the classroom in the real world. Final projects were submitted to classroom teachers and displayed in the cafeteria for all to see. Partici-

pating families received certificates of accomplishment.

The Family Math Project started with 20 families. The fifth and final monthly activity had over 75 families participate. The academic benefits of the Family Math were clear—math objectives learned in class were applied to every day problems. Family Math also was a great way for families to work together and practice communicating using math vocabulary. Parents, students, and teachers were all on the same page with math terminology and problem solving. The projects gave meaning to class activities and homework. One parent reported on an evaluation form, "It was wonderful watching my son think math as we made our geometric patterns." A student said, "I loved working with my big sister to solve the problems."

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