

Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Math Nights

*Meadow Glens Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois*

Meadow Glens' School, Family, Community Partnership (SFCP) Team conducted a Parent Interest Survey that revealed parents wanted information on how to help their children with math. As a result, the SFCP Team created a math committee to plan a strategy that would address families' needs and link to the school improvement goal for math. The committee of teachers, SFCP Team members, and the principal planned Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Math Nights.

The two Math Nights targeted several of Meadow Glens' math-related goals: to provide parents with an opportunity to experience their child's math class interactively; to show parents the new strategies currently being used to teach math; to give parents an appreciation for the effectiveness of these new strategies; and to show parents how to support their child with math homework.

For Math Nights, teachers prepared instructional presentations that put parents in the role of students so that parents would feel like they were sitting in on their child's math lesson. Teachers began the session with an overview of the math concepts the students were learning. They shared examples of children's work and invited parents to participate in solving math problems similar to the students'. Parents then showed how they solved the problems, and comparisons were made between the parents' work and the students' work.

Advanced planning for Math Nights began in the previous year. The dates for Math Nights needed to be on the school calendar early in the school year and reflect appropriate sequencing so that parents would learn the

math concepts before the students.

Math Nights were evaluated by parent turnout and exit surveys sent to parents. Survey responses highlighted the connections between home and school that were strengthened by the Math Nights. For example, one parent wrote, "It was very important for parents to understand how and why our children are learning in order to be helpful at home. I understand the methods much better when explained and am able to see examples." Another parent shared parents' gratitude for teachers' commitment to math: "Really enjoyed hearing the teachers' perspectives on how the new math strategies are helping our kids understand math concepts. I really appreciate the teachers for spending this time with us!"

Through these interactive math lessons, parents were able to understand the newly implemented math strategies, which were often very different from the methods they learned when they were in school. Teachers enjoyed having their students better supported at home. Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Math Nights strengthened the link between parents and teachers and supported a school improvement goal.

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