

Family Math Night

*Glen Haven Elementary School
Silver Spring, Maryland*

To celebrate “Maryland Math Month,” Glen Haven Elementary School holds an annual Family Math Night each April. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), PTA, math content coach, teachers, administrators, and community members work hard to ensure that this event includes everyone in the diverse student body and their families, many of whom speak English as a second language.

From 7:30 to 8:30 on a Thursday evening, students, their families, staff, and community members serving as translators participated in math-related activities such as Hands-On Equations, Estimation Jar, Data Bean Grouping, and Basic Facts Relay. Banners above each table specified the grade level, math concept, and hands-on activity. The computer lab was also open, with math software available to rotating groups of students and their families. After completing an activity, students and parents wrote comments about what they learned on “Exit Cards,” received at the start of Family Math Night. Students turned in their cards at the end of the night to receive math prizes. In addition to the math stations, students and parents could visit tables with refreshments. A representative from the Montgomery County Credit Union also set up a table with banking information and give-away items.

A well-coordinated effort involving many stakeholders made Family Math Night a success. The PTA contacted parents and neighborhood businesses to ask for donations of door prizes and gifts for students who completed

their Exit Cards, and prepared the refreshments. The PTA also gave students fliers about the event in both English and Spanish to take home and reminder stickers to wear. Teachers, under the leadership of the math content coach, designed the activity centers with manipulatives and made the banners that hung over their stations. Businesses donated prizes such as floral arrangements and hair salon and bakery gift certificates. Community members attended to translate for families whose native languages included Spanish, French, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Creole.

Two hundred and fifty students and family members participated in Glen Haven Elementary School’s Math Night. Based on the comments from Exit Cards, students learned important skills like “different strategies for estimation,” “how to subtract and add time,” and “how to do equations.” Parents described the event as “extremely well organized and enthusiastically received by students” and “great fun and a great idea.” Because of its resounding success, the ATP is already at work selecting the date for next year’s Family Math Night.

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