

Bilingual Family Workshops

*Meadow Hall Elementary School
Rockville, Maryland*

After surveying parents at Back-to-School Night, the school counselor and the parent educator at Meadow Hall Elementary School determined that parents were especially interested in ways to support their children's learning at home. As a result, Meadow Hall offered two workshops for parents: one entitled "How to Help Your Child Succeed in School" and another, "How to Support Your Child with the Math Curriculum and with Homework."

The parent workshops began with a potluck dinner in the school cafeteria for the entire family. Afterwards, the children joined Meadow Hall Elementary's Kids After-Hours Specialist for a night of fun, while parents attended a one-hour workshop.

The two workshops had similar structures. After the initial welcome, parents received an agenda and an information packet in either English or Spanish. The school counselor translated the workshop into Spanish, and the ESOL teacher prepared Spanish-language materials for parents who needed them. The presenter discussed how parents could help their youngsters with learning and homework, and explained various objectives for the school year. Teachers and the principal attended the workshops so that they could answer parents' questions after the presentation. At the end of the evening, parents filled out an evaluation form explaining what they gained from the session and indicating what topics they would like to see covered in future workshops.

The parent educator and the school counselor informed parents about the workshops through the monthly counseling letter, special fliers, and phone calls, all in Spanish if necessary. A language hotline service also facilitated communication by allowing Meadow Hall staff to give information to a receptionist, who in turn translated the information for parents. Workshop fliers contained a tear-off return slip so that the school could plan for how many families would attend. The school's Community Care Partnership provided the Kids After-Hours Specialist.

In the future, Meadow Hall Elementary plans to hold longer workshops with some new topics and vary the themes of the social hour with the families. Fifty parents enjoyed the workshops at a cost of just \$25. "I hope we have more workshops like this," stated one parent. Teachers and the principal also expressed their satisfaction with the information presented and the diversity of the families in attendance.

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