

Math for Families Night

*Rolling Terrace Elementary School
Takoma Park, Maryland*

Pizza, performances, and puzzles filled the agenda at Math for Families Night at Rolling Terrace Elementary School. Family members got to see up close what their youngsters were learning in math class—and flex their brains with fractions and mental math.

Math for Families Night actually took place over two nights: one for families of pre-kindergarteners through second graders and the other for those of third through fifth graders. Each session began with pizza, followed by a short program, during which the students performed a math-inspired skit or song. After that, everyone got down to work. Families attended two sessions.

The school bought 32,000 wooden cubes for these events. Teachers, students, and parents wrote numbers on all of the faces of the cubes, and then the teachers showed students and parents a variety of games and activities using the cubes. These activities focused on developing numeration and computation skills, addressing a goal of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). The math department developed the activities and lesson plans so that parents could experience what and how their children were learning in their math classes. Teachers also demonstrated how parents could use similar games to help their children sharpen math skills at home.

“I learned how my child learns in school,” said one parent. “This was great,” said another. “I can use these at home to help my child practice.” The teachers and administrators were pleased, too, because parents left with first-

hand knowledge of math strategies they could use at home to review and reinforce skills and concepts.

Because more than half of the 700 students at Rolling Terrace Elementary are Latino, the sessions were conducted in both English and Spanish. The school’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) planned the evening after hearing about similar math nights at nearby schools. The PTA contributed money for food, and the other costs were covered by the school’s Title I budget.

The school plans to sponsor future family nights, and the ATP intends to offer incentives to attract even more families.

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