

SMART Night (Science, Math and Relevant Technology)

*Delmae Elementary School
Florence, South Carolina*

The creative use of everyday household items brought math and science to life at Delmae Elementary School's SMART Night. The event offered families a night of fun that included math and science games, "Technology Tidbits," and a robotics display.

The school's mathematics coach first heard about math and science nights during a state training and began tailoring the practice to meet this school's specific needs. After researching and conferring with colleagues, the coach chose the acronym SMART (Science, Math and Relevant Technology) and set two goals:

- 1) Build community by having parents, students, teachers and friends come together for food, fellowship and academic activities.
- 2) Instill in students a love of science, math and technology.

SMART Night took place in January 2007, featuring estimation games, a robotics display and dinner. Parents rotated through math and science stations around the building and participated in activities with their children, such as making play dough and using decks of cards to review math concepts. "I loved playing math games with my dad. I didn't know that I could learn science while drinking a cup of hot chocolate!" commented one student.

First-grade students used food to discover geometric shapes, while fourth-graders made "canned constellations" from film canisters. The music teacher used glasses of water to demonstrate pitch, reinforcing a third-grade unit on sound.

The computer lab was up and running with many interactive sites. The school provided booklets listing educational websites and games so that families could visit them at home.

In fact, every family left with a compilation of activities from each grade and each subject.

Delmae's faculty, staff, parents and community partners collaborated on the event. Teachers took the lead in developing and selecting activities that families could later reproduce at home. Administrators and other staff members supported teachers' efforts by providing materials and supplies.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) helped set up and decorate the space, and the cafeteria staff prepared a delicious dinner. The school's community and business partners provided speakers and representatives for some activities.

To promote attendance, the school sent out fliers and announced the event in grade-level newsletters and on the school web site. Information also was posted on school marquis and on a reader board at First Reliance Bank, one of Delmae's business partners. Thanks to this publicity and tremendous effort of all involved, turnout was phenomenal. More than 200 parents, 458 students – more than half of the student body, 78 teachers and 15 community members attended.

Teachers and administrators heard positive comments about SMART Night for weeks. One third-grade teacher said, "The night was a good way to build community in our school and explain to parents through hands-on activities what our standards really mean."

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