

# South Penn Family Fair

---

*South Penn Elementary School  
Cumberland, Maryland*

**D**isciplining children is often a challenge. The families at South Penn Elementary School recognized this and asked to have a session on parenting skills at the annual South Penn Family Fair. The school obliged by organizing a workshop on positive discipline and appropriate consequences. This workshop and one on mathematics instruction made up the program of the South Penn Family Fair.

The fair, taking a carnival theme, offered families dinner, prepared and served by teachers. Following the meal, the parents headed to the workshops. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), in keeping with the school's improvement goals, chose math skills at home as the academic focus for this year's fair.

A community agency, Family Junction, presented the workshop on positive discipline. During this time, students watched a movie in a supervised classroom. Each student selected a book to keep. They also received homework passes for attending with their families.

South Penn Family Fair has four goals:

- 1) Strengthen the school's sense of community with a shared dinner;
- 2) Connect the school and families with helpful community agencies through the workshops on parenting and student behavior;
- 3) Promote teamwork at the school and with students and their parents; and
- 4) Improve the quality of the school's parental involvement program, using parents' evaluations of the activities at the fair.

In fact, it was the survey from last year's fair that identified parents' requests for more help on positive discipline techniques.

Financial support came mainly from the ATP, which raised money for several activities at a Back-to-School Carnival. The food was

the only expense, as all of the speakers and staff volunteered their time.

Publicity began with the teachers, who heard about the South Penn Family Fair at the School Improvement Team (SIT) and faculty meetings. The school sent home fliers and reminders with the students. In addition, teachers identified parents who could most benefit from the workshops and personally invited them to attend. About 36 parents took advantage of the workshops. "This was my first year attending and I really enjoyed the way things were introduced to us," wrote one parent on the evaluation form.

While providing dinner and childcare helped boost attendance, South Penn hopes to increase participation even more at future fairs by personally calling parents. The school also wants to raise more funds so that a local restaurant can cater the dinner.

The organizers consider the fair a great example of everyone working together for school improvement and student success. "It is important to find new ways to help parents become partners in their children's education. The Family Fair provides a relaxed atmosphere to enhance these partnerships," commented one teacher.

*Ann Workmeister  
School Counselor  
(301) 777-1755  
aworkmeister@allconet.org*