

# Family Math Day

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*Spooner Elementary School  
Spooner, Wisconsin*

**G**ames and activities focusing on mathematics filled the hallways, classrooms, gymnasium, and cafeteria at Spooner Elementary for its 4th Annual Family Math Day last February. Even though the school has sponsored the event for several years, it remains popular—more than 70 percent of parents and other caregivers attended the fun-filled morning of activities.

The school's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) started the event to help with a district-wide initiative to boost math skills. Putting their heads together, team members decided that a morning full of practical and entertaining math games would show students that math is more than isolated problems and encourage their parents to do more math with their children at home.

"The event illustrates all the different resources and activities that have minimal to no cost to play at home. It gives the parents ideas and makes learning fun for all," said one of the organizers of this year's math day.

On a Friday morning in late winter, approximately 300 parents and other family members participated in Family Math Day. Registration began at 8:30. Parents received a folder with a list and location of the games as well as a lunch ticket. Dozens of volunteers from the community helped staff registration tables and run the games. High school students provided childcare for parents who needed it.

For the rest of the morning, parents moved from one activity to the next with their children, stopping to play a math game or do origami. Parents and children selected from about 30 games, all of which included recommendations for grade and skill levels.

Community members, including the mayor, police officers, and business owners participated in the activities and accompanied students whose parents were not able to attend. School lunch was included in the day's events.

The biggest challenge, organizers said, is keeping the math day activities new and interesting so families will return and students will want them to. This year the school used grant money to buy new games, and redesigned the layout of some repeat activities. These innovations obviously worked, as the attendance increased again this year. Another challenge is one the ATP doesn't mind—families wanting to stay past lunch and continue playing the games!

In addition to their own students in kindergarten through fourth grade, the staff at Spooner partnered with a nearby family resource center to encourage preschool students and their families to participate. They scheduled the event on an early dismissal day so that these young guests would not get too worn out by all the activities.

School administrators plan to continue Family Math Day. They will fine-tune the activities to keep the math new and challenging, and find more efficient ways to organize the volunteers who make this truly a community event.

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