

# Jungle Math Night

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*Robert Frost Elementary School  
Pasco, Washington*

Lions, tigers, and bears couldn't stop students at Robert Frost Elementary from using their numbers during Jungle Math Night.

Members of the school's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) are always on the prowl to find new and fun ways to present math concepts to students and their families. During the 2007-08 school year, the ATP borrowed ideas from other Family Math Nights around the district to come up with the safari-themed event. They wanted a unique event that would grab the attention of parents and children and bring them together to foster student achievement. Frost Elementary figured that the exotic jungle theme would give families a taste of the tropics during Washington's frigid February.

On the evening of February 28th, approximately 245 participants from 100 families arrived at the school to partake in some jungle-style math activities. Guests entering the school encountered a life-sized jungle diorama, featuring vines and jungle animals. Over 45 volunteers—ATP members, teachers, staff, and high school students—donned safari hats and distributed goodie bags that included pencils, fast food coupons, and fake paper money. ATP members asked students to “purchase” various items with the fake money. A cookie cost \$1 and a book cost \$5. The “big-ticket” item was a set of dice with which students played several of the games.

Parent-child pairs chose to participate in several math activity tables set up around the gymnasium and in Robert Frost's hallways. At the estimation station, participants worked to determine the length of a stuffed snake and count the number of worms in a jar. A few tables down, they used monkey stamps to label the cost of different items in the jungle store. Across the hallway in the Technologically Tropical Rain Forest (otherwise known as the computer lab), students visited a jungle math web site: [www.rainforestmaths.com](http://www.rainforestmaths.com).

No school event would be complete without food! Students and parents listed shapes they used while making s'mores and constructed necklace patterns out of Jungle Fruity Loops.

ATP members hoped that parents would be inspired by the activities and get ideas for activities to do at home with their kids. In order to accommodate Robert Frost's diverse family population, teachers and volunteers conducted all of the activities in English, Spanish, and Russian.

In all, teachers, students, and parents proclaimed the event a success. The principal expressed excitement about the evening and hopes to host a similar one next year. At a monthly ATP meeting when the members debriefed the event, everyone agreed that Jungle Math Night was a great example of what the school is all about: bringing the school, community, and families together to foster student achievement.

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