

Money Matters Program

*Lynnhaven Elementary School
Virginia Beach, Virginia*

Students from Lynnhaven Elementary got a lesson in dollars and sense during a new family activity aimed at inflating students' math skills and increasing test scores. The school's Money Matters Program brought 200 students and 80 parents to an imaginary town called Pennyville where all the activities focused on finance.

The school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) planned the evening event to help improve students' math skills and test scores and to increase parent participation, which had fallen off in recent years. ATP members approached the school's math coach for ideas and learned about the Money Matters Program.

On a Thursday night in late November, the event began with dinner and then featured math games in a carnival-like atmosphere. Between 5:30 and 6:30, the staff served sub sandwiches, chicken tenders, and cookies. After dinner, guests went to the gymnasium, decorated to look like the imaginary Pennyville, where each of 14 booths housed a different math game. Each booth addressed a specific math objective from the state's learning standards. Parents and children were encouraged to play together.

The booths included "Walking to Wall Street," a measurement exercise; "Crack the Safe," where students tried to guess the amount of candy in a safe; and "Roll Down the Debt," a dice game that is all about place value. The activities were developed so that students with different levels of skill and knowledge could all be successful. In addition to these games, several "floater" volunteers roamed the town asking students to answer challenging math questions for special prizes. PTA members circulated through Pennyville, signing up new members and encouraging current members to become more involved.

Parents, teachers, and students were dazzled by all the math excitement. "The hands-

on activities were out of this world!" a teacher said.

"It was a very exciting and informative night. My children and I benefited from this activity," commented one parent.

The event cost \$1,600. The school used parent involvement funds combined with donations from local businesses to pay the tab. About 20 volunteers from the school's business partners and a mentoring organization helped out, too. ATP members put in a lot of time recruiting volunteers and securing donations—all of which added to the event's success.

School staff advertised the event through school and classroom newsletters, web site announcements, and personal letters to parents. They also hung a banner in the hallway and put a message on the school's marquee.

The Money Matters Program was such a success that the school plans another one next year. The faculty and administrators would like to provide take-home materials the next time, so that the enthusiasm for hands-on math generated in Pennyville can continue at home.

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