

# Family Math and Reading Night

---

*Meadow Hall Elementary School  
Rockville, Maryland*

Childcare, translation services, and a few technologically savvy instructors were the keys to success at Meadow Hall Elementary's Family Math and Reading Night last May.

The parent partnership committee at Meadow Hall developed the event to help parents learn fun and practical ways to help their children learn at home. A high percentage of Meadow Hall's families work in the farming industry. Long work hours make assisting their children with homework difficult.

Members of the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) sought to change that perspective by instituting a Family Math and Reading Night. They had seen other schools across the district have success with similar events. The ATP set about planning their own version, organizing teachers—mostly by grade level—to help plan a series of information sessions for parents.

The school promoted the event through fliers sent home in Spanish and English, reminders in the school newsletter, and a series of posters put up in the building's hallways. The PTA sent out e-mails through their Yahoo group. A few days before the event the school left automated messages with families, reminding them about Math and Reading Night.

On the night of the event, approximately 75 parents arrived at school, ready to learn more about how to help their children with schoolwork at home. Each parent signed up to attend three informational sessions and received a map of the classrooms where the sessions would be held. Meanwhile volunteers from the high school escorted the children to a room where they watched movies and ate pizza. After brief comments from the school's principal, parents made their way to the appropriate classrooms.

Twenty teachers who volunteered for the event hosted 20-minute sessions, such as how to navigate students' reading and math

curricula. While teachers explained their topics, the school's ESL teacher provided translation services to non-English speaking parents by reciting Spanish versions of the presentations over headphones. Special technology sessions taught parents how to use the Internet to help their children succeed academically. One teacher created a web site for parents that included all the links he discussed.

At the end of their third session, parents returned to the multipurpose room and evaluated their experiences. Every parent who completed the form was eligible for a raffle.

Evaluations of the event were extremely positive. Both parents and teachers liked the diversity of sessions and the information provided. Most parents said they would use the techniques they learned to help their children on math and reading at home.

The total cost of the event—\$260—paid for pizza and drinks. To cover the expenditures, the school charged a nominal fee for these refreshments. The school used funds from the raffle to cover the remaining expenses.

Meadow Hall's ATP will continue the event next year. They will schedule additional staff meetings to help give more structure to the sessions. They also plan to host a special fundraiser before the event, so that they can provide free food to parents.

*Brett Alcarese  
School Counselor  
(301) 279-4988*

*Brett\_Alcarese@mcpsmd.org*