

R U Smarter Than a Middle Schooler?

*Adams Friendship Middle School
Friendship, Wisconsin*

Parents at Adams Friendship Middle School learned just how smart their children really are during a game show event modeled after a popular network television show. The school's R U Smarter Than a Middle Schooler locked 120 parents and students in a battle of wits.

Teachers at Friendship wanted to encourage students to be more academically engaged. One dedicated member of the school's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) began searching the Internet for ideas that might help excite students about learning. The light bulb went on when the ATP stumbled upon a PTA message board detailing a practice based on the Fox TV show *Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?* They figured any game show event that pitted students against their parents would challenge everyone to be more academically astute.

The school's ATP set to work preparing materials for the event. First, they mailed home information and sign-up forms. The information in the packets helped parents and students study for the event. For every study-sheet that students returned to school, teachers entered that student's name into a drawing used to pick contestants during the event. That way, the more study-sheets students completed at home, the more likely they would be picked to go on stage.

The ATP also promoted the event in a series of reminders, sent with report cards, newsletters, and booster band post cards. Teachers also hung posters in the hallways advertising the event.

The next task on the ATP's to-do list was to reach out to area businesses, asking them to donate prizes for the winning contestants. More than 70 community members and business leaders donated nearly \$1,100 in cash and door prizes!

On the night of the big game show, more than 120 parents and students came to

school to test their smarts. During each round, the game show MC randomly pulled the names of one parent contestant and five middle school "classmates" from a hat. Parents then selected one of eight categories, which covered math, science, health, and social studies curricula.

The MC read the question and all parties wrote their answers on a sheet of paper. If the parent knew the correct response to the question they were invited to answer. If not, the MC gave them three different "life line" opportunities—to peek at, copy, or swap answers with a classmate of the contestant's choosing. Each correctly answered question was worth a certain amount of real money, ranging from \$5-\$100. Winners received their final earnings in the form of chamber of commerce gift certificates, which parents could use at any area business.

At the end of the night, contestants and classmates were surprised by what they'd learned. Many parents were shocked by the advanced material their children were learning in school, noting that they themselves had not been exposed to the same lessons until high school. Teachers and administrators were impressed with the organization and high participant turnout.

The school plans to host the game show event again next year. They want to begin promoting the contest earlier in the semester to encourage even more participation.

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