

Dad's Breakfast

*Elmwood Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois*

Hammers, nails, and little bit of wood helped build good relationships among families at Elmwood Elementary School last spring. During the annual Dad's Breakfast, 400 adults and children turned out for a Saturday breakfast and do-it-yourself project—making wooden stools that would be useful at home.

Elmwood's School, Family, Community Partnership (SFCP) developed the practice five years ago to bring more men into the school. Team members knew that fathers often found it difficult to come to school during the work week, so they decided that a laid-back breakfast on a Saturday would be a good way to get dads and other father figures to spend time with their children, meet the teachers, and see some of their friends and neighbors—all in one activity.

SFCP staff advertised the event with fliers, phone calls, and the school's newsletter. The principal reminded students during their lunch periods and sent e-mails to teachers and staff.

On a Saturday last March, 200 students and 200 dads, grandpas, uncles, and brothers came to the school gymnasium for the Dad's Breakfast. The school hosted two sessions—one in early morning and another in late morning—to accommodate everyone. Guests signed in and picked up their stool-making kit. They grabbed coffee, juice, and pastries for breakfast and headed to a table covered in craft paper and paint cans. Staff members manned the food tables and were available to lend a hand to struggling carpenters.

All stool-making kits included precut pieces of wood and nails. The dads furnished their own hammers, though the school had several loaners for those who forgot to bring their own. Dads helped students nail the pieces of wood together. Children were generally in charge of painting. Throughout the morning, sounds of hammering and children's laughter

filled the gym. Raffles were held during each session for golf lessons and gift certificates from local restaurants.

"We had more than 200 families in attendance. We consider this a huge success and look forward to next year's Dad's Breakfast," said one of the organizers.

Juice and bottled water cost the school about \$100. SFCP members used PTA money to cover the expenses. Families paid a \$11 fee for the step stool kits. Local businesses donated the paint and the coffee. Families provided the baked goods for breakfast.

All involved agreed that the event was a great way to spend a Saturday morning. "Wow, this was fun!" one person said. Many participants were eager to know what students and parents would get to build next year.

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