
FAMILY MATH NIGHT

Woodridge Primary School

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

Woodridge Primary School's Continuous Improvement Plan includes an action plan to improve student math achievement. Two Family Math Nights took place on March 11 and 18, 2003 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm to help reach this school improvement goal. Families who attended the evenings participated in a program that included dinner, four math sessions led by Woodridge Primary School teachers, and a raffle of math related prizes. The main emphasis of Family Math Night was to communicate to parents the new Ohio Mathematics Academic Content Standards. Along with information about the standards, the math sessions included current math vocabulary and strategies.

As families arrived for Family Math Night, they registered and received a bag containing math materials, free coupons from local businesses, and a copy of the Ohio Mathematics Academic Content Standards. Participants used the bags to collect additional math materials at each math session. Volunteers directed families to a classroom or the cafeteria to eat a complementary dinner of pizza, salad, drinks, and dessert. Following dinner, teachers led four different math presentations, explained to families how the activities support the math standards, and taught them how to use the math activities at home. Following the math sessions, families

completed an evaluation of the evening and moved to the gym for a raffle of math-related books, games, and prizes.

Parents from the Family Partnership Action Team organized the Family Math Night. They approached community businesses for donations of food for the dinner and coupons and math-related items for the bags and raffle prizes. Parents also helped serve dinner, directed families throughout the evening's events, and presented the raffle prizes. Teachers planned the math activities, and students helped with publicity and motivating family members to attend. The principal helped with last minute decisions about organizing the event, and the Curriculum Director assisted, particularly in the area of funding. Family Math Night was definitely a team effort.

Publicity for Family Math Night started off with an "I Scream for Math" pep rally held at school and attended by students, staff, parents, and a reporter from a local newspaper. A flier about Family Math Night went home to all families following the rally. Several newspaper articles about Family Math Night were in the local newspaper prior to the event. Special invitations along with the flier were sent to district administrators, including the superintendent, and local politicians. Also, information went home in the principal's and guidance counselor's newsletters.

The first major challenge to Family Math Night was not receiving the grant the Action Team applied for to provide funding. The Action Team regrouped and found contributions from the community. The second major challenge was the large number of families that wanted to attend the event. The response was more than twice what the Action Team anticipated. With so many interested families, a second Family Math Night was scheduled a week later. Doubling everything was quite a challenge, but it was worth it when all the families that responded actually attended.

The total cost of the Family Math Nights was \$350. In addition to the contributions from community businesses, the Action Team received funding from the district for math-related raffle prizes, and the district provided busing for families who needed transportation, printing of the programs, and paper and copying services for the activities.

Six hundred fourteen people attended the two Family Math Nights. Students learned that math can be fun and enjoyed by the whole family. As more math activities were done at home, students' math achievement improved in the classroom. Their willingness to do math activities at home also increased. During the Family Math Nights, teachers were able to relate to students and families in a very positive way, which developed a sense of cooperation and community. Parents responded that a positive part of the evening was meeting and working with the teachers and interacting with other parents. One parent commented, "I liked seeing how

my son participated and it taught me how to help him." Another parent said, "The best part of the evening was learning new and fun ways to learn with my child and the students I tutor at school." The results of families' evaluation forms were tabulated and reviewed at the final district Continuous Improvement Plan meeting of the year.

Working with parents, staff, and community members is the only way to make an event like this successful. Families really appreciated the organization of the event. For next year, the Action Team also will seek contributions earlier in the year and resubmit the grant proposal. The Action Team will develop a follow-up program so that parents can check out math activities to take home to work on as a family. A final improvement will be to send home a questionnaire after the event to see how often families do math activities at home and how successful the activities are with their children. The Action Team hopes to include even more parents and community members in the planning and organizing of Family Math Nights.

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