

By Christopher Burnett | Staff Writer

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Math Night adds up to fun at schools

USD 207 hosts its first district-wide Family Math Nights.

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Unified School District 207 conducted its first district-wide Family Math Nights March 2 at the three elementary schools and March 7 at Patton Junior High School as part of an initiative to encourage students and their families to instill mathematics learning using creative leisure activities. Student volunteers were in charge of the information tables and led the interactive math-related stations.

Bradley Elementary School Principal Michaela Culkin singled out the event coordinator, fifth-grade teacher Alyssa Yengo, and student volunteers as major contributors to the success of the event. Culkin said more than 350 students attended, with a total of more than 600 visitors comprised of students with their parents and siblings. She said Bradley Elementary School appreciates how invested families are in education.

“Alyssa Yengo did a great job planning and orchestrating our evening,” Culkin said. “Our student volunteers were empowered to lead the math stations, and the adults working with them reported the students pretty much ran the show.”

Fifth-grader Jia Brown helped hand out tote bags to participants as they entered the event.

“I love helping people and volunteered to help our school,” Brown said. “Math isn’t my favorite (subject), so I also came here to learn along with helping.”

Sixth-grader Trishell Keesee, Student Council president at Bradley Elementary, attended with her parents, mother Nicole and father Air Force Tech. Sgt. Richard Russo.

“I think it is a really cool idea for families to play games using mathematics,” Keesee said. “Finding ways to use math to compete like people do with other games is actually clever.”

Culkin said Family Math Night affected the entire community in terms of general volunteer service and positive synergy among grade levels and schools. She said Patton’s Family Math Night activities allowed families who had children in grade school as well as junior high to attend the math night events at both places without conflict.

Aubrie Penfield, a freshman at Immaculata High School in Leavenworth, volunteered to help when she heard about Family Math Night from Culkin, who is her neighbor.

“I figured this was a perfect way to help her school and have fun. We want to make sure all of the kids have a good time, too,” Penfield said. “My station supplies the activities sheets with information about the various math games families can play at home. There’s everything from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) experiments to simple games here.”

Pakistani Maj. Anwar Habib, international student in the Command and General Staff Officer Course, said his children love their school and were excited to share this event with the entire family.

“Two of our children attend Bradley Elementary School in first grade and pre-kindergarten,” Habib said. “This activity takes the natural excitement our children show in learning mathematics and prompts them toward the subject at a very early age. This is a great environment for our other children who are not yet in school.”

Mary Johnson attended the event with two of her grandchildren, fourth-grader Alyssa Jones and kindergartener Trenton Jones.

“My grandchildren love the subject likely because their father (CGSOC student Maj. Andre Jones) was a mathematics major,” Johnson said. “He is happy they are carrying on the tradition. As a family, we are pleased Bradley Elementary School is having this type of event for the children.”

Yengo said the primary concept of the event configuration was to host families in a carnival-like atmosphere. She said the coordinating team wanted families to be able to select different stations throughout the evening and stay as long as they wished.

“Each station was based on a different domain of math — counting and cardinality, measurement and data, logic and algebra, fractions and ratios, etc. And each station has a gift for the family to take home,” Yengo said. “Some gifts are simply instructions for more games. Other gifts are hands-on manipulative items families can use to extend learning.”

Yengo said a primary goal with this type of event is simply to excite and empower families to do math together.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Japanese Maj. Hiroyuki Kiyota and Yoshimi Kiyota watch their children, 7-year-old second-grader Daiki and 4-year-old Chisuzu, race marble-powered race cars during Family Math Night March 2 at Bradley Elementary School. The family recorded distances and continually tweaked the design of the paper cars in which the marble rode down the race shoot. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp

“Parents have always been encouraged to read to their children, but the same emphasis isn’t given to math,” Yengo said. “The most exciting part of the night, in my opinion, is the 22 fifth- and sixth-graders who have volunteered to help lead the stations. I’m so proud of their willingness to give of their time and energy to the event, and I’m confident they’ll learn just as much as they teach through the experience.”

Jana Craig-Hare, Project PRIME director for the district, said math night events were funded by a grant awarded to USD 207 by the Department of Defense Education Activity Partnership Grant Program. She said the district wrote the grant based on various ideas that related to math education rubrics.

“I think this is going to result in a huge positive for all of our students — just to see that math is exciting and not the stereotypically negatives too often associated with learning math,” Craig-Hare said. “To also have the parent engagement in the learning process at home helps toward our students’ ability to master the critical components of mathematics at the highest level possible.”

Project PRIME: Personalizing RtI (Response to Intervention) in Mathematics Education is a research-based initiative that leverages best practices in mathematics interventions, differentiated instruction and student support to positively affect student achievement.

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