



**FAMILY MATH NIGHT BUILDS EARLY NUMERACY SKILLS ESSENTIAL TO MATH SUCCESS**

Math is as easy as 1, 2, 3 for a group of junior kindergarten to grade 1 students at St. Patrick School in Cobalt. On Tuesday evening, they graduated from Family Math Night, a unique community-based program offered by the Timiskaming-Cochrane Early Years Centre.

St. Patrick School Principal Valerie Drury welcomed the chance to work in partnership with the Centre on this initiative. "The Early Years Centre has provided our families with a rich opportunity to help our students deepen their understanding of key math concepts," stated Drury. "Using strategies geared to their age level, the facilitators engaged the students in hands-on learning of math strands including numbers, measuring, geometry, patterns and graphs. The participation of the parents is key to ensuring that math vocabulary and practices are further integrated in the home setting to solidify the concepts. The progress that these youngsters made is remarkable. It is exciting to hear many of them using math terminology and making astute observations of trends using graphs. The development of such numeracy skills in the early years is critical to later numeracy success."

Trained facilitators, Brigitte Auger, Early Literacy Specialist and Natalie Forget, Early Years Practitioner, from the Timiskaming-Cochrane Ontario Early Years Centre delivered the program in partnership with Junior Kindergarten Teacher, Mrs. Jackie Livingston. The weekly sessions took place on Tuesday evenings from 5:45 to 7:30 p.m. over a six-week period at St-Patrick's School in Cobalt. The children and their parents met for a pizza dinner each week before participating in a dynamic session of interactive activities. The program was provided at no cost whatsoever to the families.



Even the graduation celebration involved learning about geometry with students constructing their own party hats by shaping construction paper circles into cones. They also estimated the number of party cake candles in a jar and placed their guess on a number zone which was used weekly for this activity. The celebration would not be complete without party games, with students using counting skills during the 'party hat toss' game. At the end of the evening, they talked about their favorite math strands and charted their preferences on a graph.



Family Math uses everyday materials and math games to help children understand math ideas. The program was developed by a team from the University of Western Ontario. With Esso's funding over the course of five years, they diligently built upon the research and successes realized at Berkeley University in the 1980's and 1990's. A web-site along with numerous resources were developed. Now, individuals and communities are free to build upon, adopt and adapt this program to meet their specific needs.

Concepts used in the real world such as measurement, estimation and mental math are sometimes difficult for children to grasp during structured classes. Family Math provides a means for parents to reinforce everyday schooling while encouraging their children to have fun as they learn. Parents gain confidence and feel they are better able to help their children enjoy and understand math in a positive environment. It is based on the Curriculum Expectations of the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training Grades 1-8 Mathematics Curriculum.

Above all the Family Math program recognizes and celebrates that children are unique!

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