

Attendance at GBMP Community Mathematics Nights Tops 3,800 through February 2008

The Greater Birmingham Mathematics Partnership recognizes that the support and involvement of parents and community members are vital for the successful implementation of quality mathematics programs. Thus, we seek to ensure a knowledgeable public by offering Community Mathematics Nights or "CMNs" during the year at venues throughout the greater Birmingham area. During these sessions, parents and other attendees are engaged in doing middle school mathematics while considering important issues in mathematics education. These evenings are presented by the Mathematics Education Collaborative (MEC) and represent one of MEC's unique contributions to mathematics education and our project. Community Mathematics Nights are two hours in length and each focuses on one, two, or three big ideas that parents need to understand in order to recognize, support and/or advocate for quality mathematics programs in their schools.

In the months of January and February 2008, GBMP held Community Mathematics Nights in 6 different local communities including Fairfield, Hoover, Homewood, Mt. Laurel, Trussville, and Hueytown. Topics addressed by these CMNs included: *"Mathematics and your Child's Future: The Basics and Beyond"*, *"Multiplication: Will Your Child Know the Basic Facts"*, *"How to Help Your Child with Math at Home"*, and *"More Ideas for Helping Your Child with Math at Home"*. Attendance at these winter 2008 sessions totaled nearly 400.

The Greater Birmingham Mathematics Partnership has now presented 41 of these Community Mathematics Nights in the past 3 years (starting January 2005). Total attendance at these 41 sessions has now reached 3,848. Nearly 1,400 parents and other attendees have been surveyed and nearly 90% have rated the Community Mathematics Nights they attended as either *Informative* or *Extremely Informative*. ***Here's what else we've heard from the most recent participants:***

When asked about any new insights they'd gained during the evening, responses included:

"The importance of encouraging reasoning and thinking (when doing math)."
"That when you practice with memorization, that is all you learn."
"Don't be afraid to jump in with (your) child".
"(We) should play more math games at home."
"That this "new math thing" is actually a good idea."

When asked to recount the most surprising idea they had encountered during the session, one parent wrote, ***"I was amazed to find out I am not so unable to learn math after all. Where were you in the 60s and early 70s?"***

Another parent noted, ***"How much the rote way of teaching our children is hurting them!"*** A teacher in attendance responded, ***"Children amazingly seem to be able to express so many more ways to solve problems than I have ever encountered...when teaching I need to ask (my students) "How else?"***

Others commented on the enthusiasm of the crowd at their session, and were surprised at how well such a large group (of attendees) could interact.

Finally, we asked attendees if there was anything else they wanted to tell us about their experience at the Community Math Night. Responses included:

"I thought it was wonderful and eye opening and I hope our school adopts what you (GBMP) are teaching."
"Hope you can expand this program."
"I'm glad I came."
"Dr. Parker teaches in a way that is not intimidating but thoroughly enjoyable."
"Very inspiring."
"This was excellent."
"I have really enjoyed attending this session and my child and I look forward to sessions in the future."

