

Fun math program fosters child/parent bonds

Liz Welter, News-Herald Media 9:55 a.m. CDT October 2, 2015



Marshfield schools offer program to help parents help kids with math homework Liz Welter/News-Herald Media



(Photo: Dan Young/News-Herald Media)

MARSHFIELD — Chloey Kurtzweil, 9, has sparkling eyes and a love of learning, particularly for math. Her mom, Amy Kurtzweil, shares her daughter's joy for number puzzles and wants to nurture her daughter's blooming interest and confidence so that it continues.

But helping Chloey with homework is becoming a bit more difficult as Chloey gets older and her assignments get harder.

"I like math and I can help her, but I want to make sure I'm giving Chloey the right kind of help," she said.

By participating in a new evening program at Grant Elementary School for parents and students, Kurtzweil hopes she learns more about the math her daughter is being taught, which in turn will help her to understand how to address homework questions.

The new program, Math and Parent Partners Program, or MAPPS, provides children with math enrichment activities while helping parents to understand the concepts their children are learning in school, said Andrea Knapp, an associate professor and director of MAPPS in the mathematical sciences department at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, which is partnering with the Marshfield School District to offer the program.

MAPPS also enhances child-parent bonds and fosters math confidence for both children and parents, Knapp said.

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The program is open to any Marshfield district child between fourth through eighth grade and their parents, though grandparents and siblings also are welcome to participate. Math-centered childcare is provided for children younger than fourth grade and the evening includes dinner, which students and parents eat while they work on the night's math problems. In addition to the Tuesday night program at Grant School, a second is held on Thursday nights at Madison Elementary School. Both programs are free.

The way in which math is taught has changed since a lot of parents were in school, making today's lessons hard for some to understand, said Jeff Damrau, principal at Grant School.

"Of all the homework, parents struggle the most helping their children in math — even at the elementary level," Damrau said.

If feedback from the participating parents and children is favorable, the school will continue to offer the program to district students. UWSP pays for half
<http://www.marshfieldnewsherald.com/story/news/education/2015/10/01/fun-math-program-fosters-chi...> 10/20/2015

of the program's cost while a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant is funding the Marshfield School District portion, Damrau said.

"It's good when you see parents working side-by-side with their child. This is a way we can help children as well as their parents," Damrau said.

At Grant School on Tuesday night, about 40 parents and students ate sub sandwiches while working to solve collaborative math problems using tangrams, geometric puzzles of a square cut into seven pieces that are used to make other shapes.



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Math teacher Kristina Vantassel instructs parents and students at the Math and Parents Partners Program at Grant Elementary School in Marshfield, Tuesday, September 29, 2015 (Photo: Dan Young/News-Herald Media)

"This is fun," Chloey said. All the children within earshot nodded in agreement as they manipulated tangrams to complete puzzles shaped like rabbits and robots.

Another goal of MAPPs is developing an awareness among the students and parents that math isn't just a classroom subject, Knapp said.

"Parents don't need to understand every homework problem to help their kids; what they need to do is bring math home in their every day life in a way that is relevant, interesting and fun," she said. For example, anyone who goes grocery shopping, takes measurements for a home improvement project or calculates scores at a football game uses math.

Tammy Klawitter of Wisconsin Rapids completed the MAPPs program in 2012 in Stevens Point with her five children and said she continues to see a difference MAPPs made for her children in math. She is the UWSP coordinator for the MAPPs program at Grant School.

"My son was listening to the television news and the reporter was talking about percents of something and my son said, 'Mom, they are wrong.' I asked him how he figured it out and he was right," Klawitter said. "This is neat when you see them apply what they've learned in MAPPs to a real life situation."

If interested

What: Math and Parent Partners Program for parents and children in fourth through eighth grades with dinner and free childcare provided

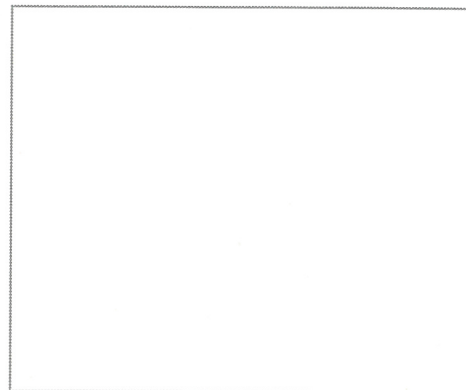
When: For 7 weeks from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays at Grant Elementary School. The other program at Madison Elementary School is from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Cost: Free

For more information: Call Andrea Knapp at 715-346-4329 or email her at aknapp@uwsp.edu

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