



Math Partners Annual Report 2007-08

For the past 8 years, the Math Partners Program of PENCIL Foundation has provided Metro Public Schools with enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers who give an extra boost to students who are struggling with math. This supplemental program helps students strengthen basic math skills and concepts with an especially strong emphasis on solving word problems. The activities are engaging and hands-on; the small group setting encourages students to work collaboratively and talk about math.

PENCIL Foundation recruits, screens, trains and places volunteers in middle schools (grades 5-8) throughout the district. Math Partners meet weekly with groups of up to four students for a minimum of 8 weeks. More than just a math program, Math Partners provides the content area that motivates an ongoing mentoring relationship between students and caring community volunteers. Furthermore, the math activities are all designed to be collaborative and to build team problem-solving skills. Students who might be frustrated by their lack of math skills in the classroom can feel that they are truly contributing to the solutions in this setting. Teachers, almost universally, report back to us that they see the benefits for the students of the small group interactivity.



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Program Highlights for 2007-08:

- A total of 99 community volunteers assisted 376 struggling middle school students. Since the program began in 2000, 2,331 students have expanded their math abilities through this program.
- ThinkLink tests indicate that students in the program are making significant academic progress in math. These tests are used by the school system as a predictor of student

*“At first I had bad grades but you helped me bring it up. And also thank you with division, decimals and all the other things. I had fun with you. I hope you come next year to help.” –
fifth grade student*

performance on the annual state mandated TCAP tests. The goal is for students to attain a score of 100 or more as an indication of “one academic year of growth.” A sampling of 5th-8th graders in the program indicated that students made an average yearly gain of 93.4.

- 94% of the Math Partner volunteers surveyed reported that the program improved students’ abilities to do

math; 100% of the teachers/school coordinators reported improvement.

- 97% of the volunteers reported the development of successful, effective mentoring relationships through Math Partners while 100% of the teachers/school coordinators observed the positive impact of the program on their students.
- Responded to the urgent need identified by school administrators for volunteers to help ELL students. Many of these students, especially those from refugee camps from countries in turmoil, have extremely limited academic backgrounds; some have never been to school. In response to these specific needs, additional Math Partners curriculum resources were created.
- Expanded classroom support for the exemplary AVID program (Advancement via Individual Determination), a nationally recognized program that provides academic support and college access for underserved student populations.
- Coordinated activities with the various offices of Service-Learning and Community Engagement for undergraduate and graduate students at Meharry & Vanderbilt Medical Schools, Belmont, Tennessee State, and Vanderbilt Universities.
- Provided a math-tutoring workshop for Big Brothers, Big Sisters mentors who want to help Little Brothers and Little Sisters academically.
- Collaborated with the Bethlehem Community Family Resource Center to bring additional resources and volunteers to address the needs of students in this at-risk inner-city community.
- Presented a session at the national Gulf South Service Learning Conference on the effectiveness of using medical students as Math and Reading Partner volunteers.
- Presented a session on “Conceptualizing Math Concepts” to 2 undergraduate classes at Tennessee State University.

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