



# Math Partners Annual Report 2008-09

The Math Partners Program of PENCIL Foundation links a dedicated group of volunteers to the children in Metro Public Schools. Math Partners understand the value of giving an extra boost to students who are struggling with math. This supplemental program, now in its 9<sup>th</sup> year, 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 schools throughout the district. At the request of Metro Schools' administrators, the program has expanded to meet the needs of third and fourth graders as well as middle schoolers (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade). 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. Students who are English Language Learners have especially benefited from the small group activities and extra focus on math vocabulary. Teachers, almost universally, report back to us that they see the benefits for the students of the small group interactivity.



### **Underwriting support for Math Partners:**

Dell Foundation, The Oprah Winfrey Foundation, AT&T, Memorial Foundation, Healthways Foundation, First Tennessee Foundation, Wal-Mart Foundation, Publix Super Markets Charities, Robert-Orr-SYSCO, CapStar Bank, Piedmont Natural Gas Foundation/Nashville Gas, and United Way of Metropolitan Nashville.

## Program Highlights for 2008-09:

- A total of 104 community volunteers assisted 485 students struggling with math including 194 elementary school children and 291 middle school students. Since the program began in 2000, 2,816 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 performance on the annual state mandated TCAP tests. The ThinkLink goal is that students attain a score of 100 or more as

an indication of “one academic year of growth.” A sampling of scores taken of 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders from schools throughout the county-wide school system, shows that students made an average yearly gain of 99.8.

- 97% of the Math Partner volunteers surveyed reported that the program improved students’ abilities to do math; 100% of the teachers/school coordinators reported improvement.
- The success of Math Partners as an in-school program can be measured by the 96% of the volunteers who 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.
- Responding to the urgent need identified by school administrators for volunteers to help ELL students, volunteers helped 140 ELL students who needed significant work to catch up with their classmates. 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 resources were identified for volunteers to use with these students.
- AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) is a nationally recognized program that provides academic support and college access for underserved student populations. In 2008-09, Math Partner volunteers provided in-class support for three classrooms in the district.
- PENCIL staff provided a series of 4 math-tutoring workshops for Big Brothers, Big Sisters mentors who want to help Little Brothers and Little Sisters academically.
- Collaboration with the Bordeaux and Fall-Hamilton Community Family Resource Centers brought additional resources and volunteers to address the needs of students in these at-risk inner-city communities.

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