



FAMILY NIGHT TOOLKIT



**EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO RUN
YOUR OWN MATHMINDS FAMILY NIGHT!**

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MIND
RESEARCH INSTITUTE



Welcome to MathMINDs Family Night: Engagement At Its Best

Welcome to MathMINDS Family Night by MIND Research Institute. In our mission to equip all students to mathematically solve challenging problems, we see the need to reach a student's entire ecosystem, especially their family. This family night is a part of our effort, through MathMINDs, to change not just a student's relationship with mathematics, but our entire society's relationship with it. Facilitating a MathMINDs Family Night is a great way to contribute to your students' development beyond the event itself. Here is everything you need to run a successful MathMINDs Family Night—at your school, library, community center or company.



What people are saying about MathMINDS Family Night

“ I love how it incorporates math and literacy.

— Teacher, Crothers ES, Detroit

“

The variety is great. Stories are great. Good combo of history and math. Awesome!

— Parent,
Clarenceville SD, Dearborn

92%

of attendees feel that MathMINDS Family Nights change the way they think or feel about math.

“

Kids are still talking about it even days afterwards. I believe we really made a difference in the lives of students and families.

— Principal, Escuela Vieau Academy,
Milwaukee

“

I saw students teaching parents and siblings, and families working together and bonding over an educational game and I think that goes a long way in changing their perceptions of school and learning.

— Volunteer, Indiana

Four Things to Avoid at Family Night

Several traditional family engagement strategies, although enticing, have shown to be ineffective. Therefore, MathMINDs Family Nights are designed to run without them, allowing the event to be more enjoyable, natural and impactful.

When using MathMINDs Games for a family night, avoid these four tendencies:



Passports and raffles. Research clearly shows that incentivizing learning not only produces less engagement, it also decreases creativity and problem-solving. In other words, the engagement you do get is fleeting and superficial. With MathMINDs, families engage for long periods of time without the need for extrinsic rewards. Avoid extrinsic rewards entirely.



Station rotation. In the classroom, station rotation often makes a lot of sense. But at a family night, it tends to encourage browsing a station for 1-5 minutes, which is too superficial for true impact. It is better for attendees to sink their teeth into one or two games than to skim the surface of too many things. Deeper levels of enjoyment come when we invest more attention and effort than we expected, never less. MathMINDs designs games for families to sit and play together for long periods of time, sometimes 30 minutes or more on a single game. Avoid giving too much content to families. Moreover, we've found that families tend to prefer to stay in one seat once they're settled in—especially if they are carrying a diaper bag or pushing a stroller. At a MathMINDs Family Night, facilitators pass out the games to families, allowing them to spend their time playing, not moving from place to place.



Getting in the driver's seat. Families need opportunities to engage with mathematics on their own. After all, when the night is over, we want them to have the foundation to continue without us. To do this, they need to drive their own experience. With MathMINDs, the content is designed for families—not the facilitators or event organizers—to be in the driver's seat. The math speaks for itself. You don't have to convince or draw in families. Instead, facilitators should provide foundational support for families to take over. And, of course, facilitators can be one of the players in the game. This allows you to spend time getting to know families and playing with them. You don't have to drive engagement, you get to experience it alongside the entire community.



Hosting a separate literacy night. When using our storybook board games you can tackle math and literacy all in one. This makes scheduling much easier. You can even run the same night twice impacting even more families in both literacy and mathematics.

Roles for Facilitators (Volunteers)

Facilitating gameplay with those families that need it is one of the main roles. However, sometimes a facilitator cannot stay the entire night or isn't comfortable with the social interactions that come with game play. This is OK. Because families will for the most part drive their own experience, any activity that helps families stay focused on their time together is of great value. This includes event check-in, passing out food, table clean up before gameplay, social media, etc.

We generally recommend 1 facilitator for every 20 guests. In practice, a few people who sign up to volunteer end up not making it the night of the event, so if you plan for 1 facilitator for every 15 guests, you will likely land around the 1:20 ratio on the night of the event.

Below is a list of some facilitator roles you may want to fill. Most volunteers can help in multiple roles, but you may have some who are not comfortable in all but a few.



- **Event coordinator** (print invite, order food, track RSVPs)
- **Event set up** (tables and chairs)
- **Event check in** (greet families, make sure they sign in, calculate total attendance)
- **Food specialist** (pass out food, maintain clean food stations)
- **Gameplay facilitator** (pass out games, support families playing together, play with families as needed)
- **Supply management** (pass out games)
- **Social media guru** (share photos and live updates using #MathMINDs)
- **Game collection** (ensure returned games are organized and complete)
- **Survey specialist** (hand out surveys or gather feedback quotes from guests)

MathMINDs Family Night Pre-event Timeline

✓	Timing	Action
	6 weeks ahead	Choose date.
	6 weeks ahead	Choose the location (note maximum occupancy seated as groups at tables) and coordinate getting tables and chairs.
	6 weeks ahead	Order MathMINDs games at www.mathmindsgames.com : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended 1 South of the Sahara box per family. • Supply can change quickly. If you have questions or concerns about securing enough games for your event, email mathminds@mindresearch.org. • Note that we offer games in English or Spanish.
	5 weeks ahead	Send out invitations. (Click here for template: English Spanish)
	3 weeks ahead	Recruit volunteer facilitators (See page 4 for facilitator roles): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 volunteer per 20 attendees • Older students make excellent facilitators • Let them know they will need to attend a 1-hour training the night of the event.
	2 weeks ahead	Send out event reminder.
	1 week ahead	Compile RSVPs and ensure seating.
	1 week ahead	Place food order (if necessary) based on the total number of attendees and volunteers!
	1 week ahead	Ensure children’s photo release forms have been filled out. Otherwise do not photograph and post. Child privacy and safety are of utmost priority. (Click here for sample photo release)
	1 week ahead	Plan for how you will distribute and share games after the event, e.g., give one game to each family in attendance or operate a “library check out” model for families. (Click here for template)
	1 week ahead	Make sure your games have arrived.
	1 week ahead	Provide an alternate activity area for early learners under seven years old. (Download sample activities here).
	1 week ahead	Confirm the location and the availability of tables and chairs.
	1 day ahead	Print sign-in sheet. (Click here for template)

MathMINDs Family Night Day-of-Event Timeline

✓	Timing	Action
	90 minutes before	Set up tables & supplies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables for families to sit. • Supplies table set with games. • Check-in/registration table with sign-in sheets. • Food & beverage tables (optional).
	1 hour before	Volunteers/facilitators arrive.
	1 hour before	Training for facilitators and volunteers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set expectations around roles and responsibilities. • Let them play the games during this time to get familiar with them.
	15 minutes before	Dinner arrival & set up (grab a few hands to help).
	Event start time	Begin guest check-in. (Click here for sample sign in sheet) Volunteers help with meals.
	30 minutes after	Dinner concludes and program begins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome remarks from event leader (briefly).
	35 minutes after	Game play. Pass out the games and let families play. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect 45-60 min of gameplay.
	90 minutes after	Closing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you remarks. • Hand out surveys. (Click here for sample: English Spanish) • Breakdown and cleanup.



Offering food at the beginning of the night is a great way for families to start with some quality time, since they don't always have the chance to share a meal together. While hosts sometimes worry that families will leave after dinner and before playing games, we have not found that to be the case when using MathMINDs Games.

MathMINDs Family Night

Post-event Action Items

✓	Action
	Enact your distribution plan for your MathMINDs games. Options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a game box to each family at the end of the evening. • Invite students or families to check out games from the library. (Click here to see sample check-out process) • Store them for for Family Reading Days or other activities.
	Post any approved photos on social media using #MathMINDs and tag @MIND_Research.
	Share your feedback with us.
	E-mail any questions, comments or concerns to mathminds@mindresearch.org .
	Plan your next MathMINDs Family Night.

Our research shows that families play 10-12 times in the first month following one of our MathMINDs Family Nights and that has significant, measurable impact on student and parent mindsets around mathematics. If possible, please offer families the chance to take the games home. This turns a one-off event into measurable, sustained engagement.

There are lots of uses for your MathMINDs games after your event. Fun options include:

- Station during math rotations
- Family reading sessions
- Fun Friday
- Indoor recess
- Small group play at
 - Local youth organization
 - Children's hospital

**CLICK HERE
TO DOWNLOAD RESOURCES**

South of the Sahara flyer
 Family Night invitation template (English)
 Family Night invitation template (Spanish)
 Survey (English)
 Survey (Spanish)
 Library Check-Out form
 Welcome Sign for event
 Sign-in sheet for attendees
 Child photo release form