

# CV Schools game nights aim to reinforce curriculum

- By Nicole Tuttle For Digital First Media – The Macomb Daily
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Parent Education Network (PEN) in the Chippewa Valley Schools district will host a math workshop for grades three through five on Jan. 17. Pictured are Kindergartners Mario Viviano, Cameron Walker and Ayden Gifford, who won raffle prizes at a PEN Workshop at Huron Elementary School on Nov. 8.

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Chippewa Valley Schools' Parent Education Network (PEN) is inviting students from Mohawk Elementary School to a math workshop on Jan. 17. Pictured are first graders Daisy Hull, Elena Cutlip and Lena Cobb, who won raffle prizes at a PEN Workshop at Huron Elementary School on Nov. 8.

Student's school angst and parent's frustration with difficult curriculum subjects can become fun and games in Chippewa Valley Schools that host Parent Education Network Workshops.

Parent Education Network (PEN) Workshops began in the Chippewa Valley Schools district's educational services department about 18 years ago according to Donna Kirchhoff, the district's community outreach coordinator.

"For me personally, I started this program because my son was a struggling reader," Kirchhoff said. "And I wanted to help him. I wanted to know what could I do to help him. I ended up talking to instructors and getting information, and then I ended up questioning the director."

These conversations concluded with Kirchhoff being offered a position in the district.

"So then I did a lot of research work with great teachers, principals and para-educators to develop the program," Kirchhoff said.

The program is funded through a Title I grant. Workshops are held several times during the school year, based on specific Chippewa Valley Schools building requests.

"It promotes parent involvement. It has an educational basis that can be extended by doing things at home. Each activity is designed to take from 15 to 20 minutes to complete," Kirchhoff said.

Programs are developed for lower elementary students, upper elementary students and middle school students. Elementary programs usually focus on math or English Language Arts, while middle school topics range from vaping dangers to transitioning to high school and can involve collaboration with Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families.

"The ultimate goal is to give parents tools to use at home to reinforce curriculum taught in classrooms," Kirchhoff said.

PEN will host a workshop for Mohawk Elementary School students in grades three, four and five on Jan. 17 at the Macomb Township school, located on Romeo Plank Road south of 22 Mile Road. The free event begins at 6:15 p.m. Registration forms were distributed to students at the school or available online for Mohawk parents.

The evening will focus on learning math centered activities appropriate for each grade level which will be demonstrated by teachers. Free childcare for younger siblings is offered. All activities are developed for parents to use at home with students, and copies of the games are distributed.

“In the fifth grade, they are going to be doing things with decimals and geometric shapes and multiplication,” Kirchhoff said. “And fourth graders will do fractions and place value and decimals.”

Three breakout sessions are held for each grade level. Parents and students will rotate through three sessions that are about 20 minutes long each.

“We have Place Value Madness. We provide a game board with a pawn and you go around the board,” PEN Assistant Parent Liaison Michele Harrison said.

Students who attend will be eligible for a raffle. PEN raffle prizes are usually displayed at the participating school ahead of time, as this encourages students to want to attend PEN workshops with their parents, Kirchhoff said.

Some of the future PEN Workshops scheduled for Chippewa Valley elementary schools include Huron on Jan. 24 and Ottawa on Jan. 31. Although the district doesn't follow up on the workshops with statistics, parents are asked to complete evaluation forms asking what they have found most useful in the workshops, according to Kirchhoff.