

YOUR HOMETOWN: Park View PTA Brings Funny Math Man To Town  
Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, VA) - Wednesday, March 12, 2014  
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**PENN LAIRD** - For many students, "math" and "fun" are two terms that go together about as well as peanut butter and ketchup.

But on Monday afternoon in Penn Laird, an actor showed kids and staff alike at Peak View Elementary School that arithmetic can indeed tickle the funny bone.

In fact, the name of Ben Bendor's math show says it all: "Arithmetickles."

The Peak View PTA paid \$1,440 for two shows, which had students and teachers in rapt attention - and often, hysterics.

The aim is to help children and families enjoy math, said Bendor, 56, who developed the basics of the program for his twin children when they were in first through fourth grades.

Bendor, who emigrated from Israel to New Jersey 25 years ago, took theater games that had nothing to do with math and adapted them to fill a need. He noted that similar shows by performers around the U.S. dealt with science or nature, for example, but not math.

The program includes number games, mime, theatrical effects and magic tricks using the principles of math. Physical humor also plays a role.

For example, one game features several audience members who are called up to the stage and must work together to form a "human number." The audience then must guess what number they're making.

The production is constantly evolving, Bendor said, adding that he tailors it to different age groups and grades.

The show, which he has been performing for 18 years, includes 22 math games, any one of which Bendor can use at any given time, incorporating children, teachers and parents in the process. Audience participation, in fact, is a big factor, Bendor explains, and children and teachers are often called to the stage to help out.

The arithmetic in the show is a review of basic math, but it does make one think. The students often don't realize they are solving math problems because they are having so much fun, he said. As the program's website says, "Arithmetickles doesn't aim to teach math but to make it so cool (and so much fun) that students will want to learn it."

Park View PTA President-elect Kyle Laver found out about Arithmetickles online. She viewed two 10-minute videos from shows recorded in Queens, N.Y.

Bendor gave the Peak View crowd an A-plus for enthusiasm and math smarts.

"This school was great, but in many cases you ask them the basics and they don't even listen to you," Bendor said. "Sometimes the level [of cognitive development] is so low it's embarrassing. My challenge is to fit the activities into the [level of the] school."

He travels across the country, conducting some 300 one-man shows a year, as many as five per day.

His wife, Sandra, a singer and performer in her own right, made the set and costumes that Bendor uses. She occasionally accompanies Bendor on his trips, which are done September through May during the school year.

Bendor used to have as many as four one-man shows traveling to different locations, but had to cut back this year because of the economic downturn. He now is the only one doing the shows.

For more information, go online at [arithmetickles.com](http://arithmetickles.com).

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