Cookin' with Mama Ray

Alamosa Elementary School K-2, Alamosa School District

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Alamosa School District serves a rural community where access to educational resources and support can be limited. The goal of Cookin' with Mama Ray was to support families by providing practical skills and resources that strengthen learning and daily life at home, such as cooking on a budget.

The people involved with planning and implementing Cookin' with Mama Ray were the district MTSS coordinator, elementary school teachers, a parent liaison, and the founder of Shooting Stars Cultural and Leadership Center, a non-profit community partner located in Alamosa.

Through a National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) literacy grant, Alamosa School District hosted monthly parent meetings designed to provide families with opportunities to learn new skills and access valuable resources. Parents were surveyed to determine what topics they wished to explore and what skills they hoped to develop. One popular topic identified by families at Alamosa Elementary School K-2 was cooking on a budget. In response, Cristalray Dominguez, co-founder of Shooting Stars Cultural and Leadership Center in Alamosa, hosted a special class titled "Cookin' with Mama Ray." During this class, Mama Ray demonstrated how to prepare four different meals, each designed to fit a low budget. She prepared the meals ahead of time, which not only allowed families to see the process step by step but also introduced financial literacy concepts, such as cost management, portion planning, and grocery budgeting. Families received the ingredients needed to recreate the meals at home, allowing them to practice cooking together.



Cookin' with Mama Ray was evaluated through a combination of pre- and post-workshop feedback from families. Before each session, parents filled out a survey to identify their specific needs and interests. After the workshop, parents were invited to provide feedback via a QR code. Responses indicated that families found the classes engaging, informative, and helpful for applying skills at home. Families reported enjoying the class immensely, noting that it helped them save money while also fostering creativity in the kitchen. Students enjoyed participating alongside their parents, making it a fun and educational family activity that encouraged healthy habits, collaboration, and shared learning. This ongoing feedback helped to refine future workshops and tailor content to family needs.

For other schools or districts looking to conduct a similar initiative, Alamosa staff recommend starting by surveying families to identify relevant topics and interests. They also suggest designing interactive, hands-on sessions with practical applications and providing take-home materials. As one facilitator shared, "Families learn best by doing together," and a parent noted, "This experience helped us save money while strengthening family connections at home."