



What Families Can Do

1

Be positive!

If you have a negative attitude about mathematics, chances are your child will, too. Help your child have a “can do” attitude by praising your child’s efforts as well as her accomplishments. Acknowledge the facts that mathematics can be challenging at times and that persistence and hard work are the keys to success. Relate mathematics learning to other endeavors that require hard work and persistence, such as playing a sport. Struggling at times in mathematics is normal and is actually necessary to, and valuable in, understanding mathematics.

2

Link mathematics with daily life

Every day, people face situations that involve mathematics, such as deciding whether one has enough money to purchase a list of items at the store, reading a map to find out where one is, building a budget, deciding on the shortest route to a destination, developing a schedule, or determining the price of an item on sale. Help your child realize that mathematics is a significant part of everyday life. Suggestions for discussing mathematics with your elementary, middle, or high school child during everyday activities are listed at the end of this section.

Ideas to Help Your Child Succeed in and Enjoy Mathematics

3

Make mathematics fun

Play board games, solve puzzles, and ponder brain teasers with your child. Your child enjoys these kinds of activities while enhancing his mathematical thinking. Point out the mathematics involved, and have your child discuss the strategies he used.

4

Learn about mathematics-related careers

Mathematics is foundational to a wide variety of interesting careers. Research different careers with your child, and find out what she should be doing now to prepare for these options. Help your child understand that the school courses she takes now and the grades she earns will affect her future. One source of information on the many career possibilities that involve mathematics is *Career Ideas for Kids Who Like Math*, by Diane Lindsey Reeves.

5

Have high expectations

Traditionally, in North America the belief that only some students are capable of learning mathematics has prevailed. For example, tracking has consistently disadvantaged groups of students through classes that concentrate on remediation and do not offer significant mathematical substance. Many students, especially those who are poor, nonnative speakers of English, disabled, female, or members of racial-minority groups, have become victims of low expectations. Today we are guided by a vision of mathematics for all. You would not expect your child not to read; similarly, you should not expect your child not to do mathematics. Your attitude and expectations are crucial to influencing the future opportunities for your child. Communicate high expectations to your child and his teachers, counselors, and administrators. Make sure that your child is getting the same opportunities in mathematics as everyone else, and is taking challenging mathematics classes each year, all the way through high school.

6

Support homework, don't do it!

Homework is an area that can cause trouble in most households. Relax, and remember whose homework it is. If you take over doing homework for your child, you encourage him to easily give up or seek help when working on a challenging problem. If you start to panic when you do not know how to do the mathematics, you may signal negative thoughts about mathematics to your child. Your child is not likely to be resourceful, persistent, or confident if you react in either of these ways.

Think of yourself as more of a guide rather than your child's teacher. Your role is not only to support her but also to help her take responsibility for herself. You can facilitate your child's homework by asking questions and listening to your child. The simple act of having your child explain something out loud can often help her figure out the problem. Encourage your child to also show all her calculations or a description of her thinking process on paper to support the solution to a problem. This recording gives the student something to look back on, either for review or to spot and fix a mistake. It can also furnish the teacher with useful information related to the student's reasoning and understanding.

“Every day, people face situations that involve mathematics.”

