

## SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN DOING BETTER IN MATHEMATICS

**Being supportive** of your child's ability to learn math starts with how you talk to your child about math. Although parents can be a positive force in helping children learn math, they also can undermine their children's math ability and attitudes by saying things such as: *"Math is hard,"* or *"I'm not surprised you don't do well in math, I didn't like math either when I was in school,"* or *"I wasn't very good in math and I'm a success, so don't worry about doing well."* Although you can't make your child like math, you can encourage her to do so, and you can take steps to ensure that she learns to appreciate its value both in her everyday life and in preparing for her future. You might point out to your child how fortunate she/he is to have the opportunity to learn mathematics today—when mathematics knowledge can open the door to so many interesting and exciting possibilities.

In everyday interactions with children, there are many things that parents can do—and do without lecturing or applying pressure—to help children learn to be problem solvers, to communicate mathematically and to demonstrate mathematical reasoning abilities. These skills are fundamental to learning mathematics.

### Some Important Things Your Child Needs to Know About Mathematics Based on the New Common Core State Standards

**1. Problems Can Be Solved in Different Ways.** Although most math problems have only one answer, there may be many ways to get to that answer. Learning math is more than finding the correct answer; it's also a process of solving problems and applying what you've learned to new problems.

**2. Wrong Answers Sometimes Can Be Useful.** Accuracy is always important in math. However, sometimes you can use a wrong answer to help your child figure out why she made a mistake. Analyzing wrong answers can help your child to understand the concepts underlying the problem and to learn to apply reasoning skills to arrive at the correct answer. Ask your child to explain how he/she solved a math problem. Their explanation might help you discover if he/she needs help with number skills, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, or with the concepts involved in solving the problem.

**3. It's Okay to Take Risks! Help your child to be a risk taker.** Help him/her see the value of trying to solve a problem, even if it's difficult. Give your child time to explore different approaches to solving a difficult problem. As he works, encourage him/her to talk about what he/she is thinking. This will help him/her to strengthen math skills and to become an independent thinker and problem solver.

**4. Being Able to Do Mathematics in Your Head Is Important.** Mathematics isn't restricted to pencil and paper activities. Doing math "in your head" (mental math) is a valuable skill that comes in handy as we make quick calculations of costs in stores, restaurants or gas stations. Let your child know that by using mental math, his/her math skills will become stronger.

**5. It's Okay to Use a Calculator to Solve Mathematics Problems.** It's OK to use calculators to solve math problems—sometimes. They are widely used today, and knowing how to use them correctly is important. The idea is for your child not to fall back on the excuse, "I don't need to know math—I've got a calculator." Let your child know that to use calculators correctly and most efficiently, you first need to know how to do math. The calculator will only solve for problems that you know how to enter correctly. You also need to know math to understand when the calculation that you get might be wrong for the problem that you are solving. Remember "garbage in garbage out"...

## HOW DOES THIS GUIDE HELP TO SUPPORT MY CHILD?

This guide has been structured to provide parents with a quick reference for the expectations which your child will need to meet from Kindergarten through High School as our school district transition to the Common Core State Standards.

This Parent Guide includes:

- **Key common core academic skills** for mathematics which children will be learning and need to master by grade level.
- **Activities** that parents can do at home to support their child's learning
- **Recommended skills** which **parents should monitor** and discuss with their child's teacher.

This Parent Guide may contain specific terms that pertain to English Language Arts concepts that have been highlighted in *red italic* print. You will be able to find a **glossary** at the end of the booklet that will define these concepts.

Feel free to make changes in an activity—shorten or lengthen it—to suit your child's interests and attention span. Most of the things that you might need for these activities are found around most homes or convenient local locations for example grocery stores, parks, libraries, and museums.

As a parent, you can help your child **want to learn** in a way no one else can. That desire to learn is a key to your child's success, and, of course, enjoyment is an important motivator for learning. As you choose activities to use with your child, remember that helping to learn doesn't mean that you can't laugh and have a good time. In fact, you can teach your child a lot through play. And you can play with and make games out of almost any reading and writing skill or concept. We hope that you and your child enjoy these activities and that they inspire you to think of additional activities of your own.