

Leveraging Literacy Strategies to Support Mathematical Understanding

You have probably been hearing that changes are being made to the way Math is taught in today's classrooms. For most adults, we learned through the "I do, we do, you do" method, where we picked things up by mimicking the procedure the teacher was demonstrating on the board. We "got it" when our answers matched those of the teacher, but, because our thinking was focused solely on the steps of the procedure, we may not necessarily have come away with an understanding of the concept behind it. Essentially, this produced quick and predictable results and, when we struggled, our teachers or parents would usually step in right away to show the next step. Unfortunately, although this was well-intentioned, it further removed opportunities for us to problem solve, build confidence, and forge our own unique paths to learning.



One way to think about how we should be teaching math is to reflect on how we support our children when they are learning how to read. The first times we read to our children, we are excited and we share that excitement with them, something that engages their imagination. In the process, whether it is at home or in the classroom, this interaction helps children learn the sounds and symbols of our alphabet. Then, we give them simple books that they can try on their own, and step back a little even as we support them in sounding out words and making sense of the context. As our children get more proficient and comfortable, we introduce new strategies to extend their vocabulary and comprehension, but, for

the most part, give them the freedom to read on their own while providing both books and opportunities to read them.

Math, we have come to realize, has to be taught using similar strategies, like using fun and exciting math games to encourage students to construct their own understandings of Math concepts and guide their learning. The role of teacher / parent has evolved into that of a facilitator who provides children with opportunities to develop strategic and logical thinking talents and problem-solving skills. This change in how math is approached is primarily about asking our children good questions and constantly challenging them to prove their thinking, an approach that validates each child's unique way of reasoning. In the end, with a shift towards a process that highlights problem-solving in lieu of one that is entirely focused on the solution, the students construct their own understanding of mathematical concepts rather than simply being given a list of steps to memorize.



Sources:

Minton, Leslie. (2007) *What If Your ABCs Were Your 123s?: Building Connections Between Literacy and Numeracy*. California: Corwin Press.

Dyke, Emily & Dyke, Joe. (2014) *Ten Things Every Parent Should Know About Math*. Retrieved from: <https://mathinspirations.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/10-Things-Every-Parent-Should-Know.pdf>

#MathFail?

This month's #MathFail? is found when we take a closer look at how companies market their products. Try engaging your child(ren) in discussions about product labelling. What questions do they have? What strategies could they come up with to solve the problem?



Source: @saravdwerf