Help Your Student Learn Math; A Parent's Guide.

The Big Three Questions

Have your student explain the notes to you each night after math class. Ask a lot of 'why' questions to help your student solidify their new learning. The three big questions are;

- What did you learn today?
- How does what you learned relate with what you already know?
- Why are we learning this?

The "Nothing" Battle Plan

Millions of conscientious parents have asked their teenager the question, "What did you learn today?" Millions of teenagers have given the dreaded non-answer, "Nothing." Here are some hints to turn nothing into something.

- Instead say, "Show me your class notes."
- Answer back, "Well, if you're learning nothing at school, then I will make sure you learn something at home. Get out your books and I'll give you some homework."
- Before asking the question, contact the teacher and find out the subject for that day. When confronted with "nothing," answer back, "Your teacher said you talked about _____ today."
- Instead of asking, "Did you do your homework?" say, "Show me your homework so you can explain it to me." Then listen and ask clarifying questions.

Helping Your Student Relate Math

Relating new math ideas to things they have already learned, and to real life is one of the most important steps in learning math. Students who succeed in relating these things have a much higher success rate.

There are two sets of things that your student needs to relate to each day's class.

- What have I already learned in math that today's lesson builds upon?
- What do I know about the world to which I can apply today's lesson?

Relating the Lesson to Other Math

Since math lessons are designed to build upon prior knowledge, the first is easier. Here are some ideas that can help:

- Look at the last two lessons in the math text and have your student tell you what the new lesson adds to the prior lessons.
- Ask your student what they already know that makes the new knowledge possible. Most students will have difficulty articulating this, so be ready to ask a lot of questions that might lead the student to conclusions.

Relating Math to the Student's World

Relating math to the world can be difficult, but it is also the best way for any math student to remember and be able to apply math in life, not just the classroom. Here are some ways to help your student make these connections

- Most math books in use in today's classroom contain connections to the real world. One of the problems with this is that students' personal interests vary, so one connection may not affect your student the same way another might.
- Start by reading the connections in your student's math book. Then think about the world the student is familiar with. Does the connection from the book fit into your student's world? If yes, then use it. If not, see if it suggests something in your student's world that uses similar math.
- Ask your student about something in their world that relates to the day's math lesson. Discuss with them the mathematics involved at get them to construct a math question relating to that.

Math Success Strategies

- Make sure your student completes all homework on time. For best results, have your student complete the homework the night of the class, then do a five minute review the next night.
- Drill your student on vocabulary words. In math, definitions are rigorous, and we refer back to them often. The better the student remembers the definitions, the more class instruction will make sense.
- Project a positive attitude about your student’s ability to learn math.
- Encourage your student to come before or after school for additional help.

When Your Student Gets Stuck

- Ask them three questions:
  - What do you already know?
  - What will the answer look like?
  - What is the next step?
- Have them draw a picture or diagram.
- Have them find similar problems in their notes or in the book.
- Have them do homework with a friend.
- Have them take a break – come back to the problem later.
- Never stop doing homework because of troubles with one problem.

Other Resources

Prentice-Hall Parent's Guide
http://www.phschool.com/cmp2/pdfs/pg_brochure.pdf

Ontario Ministry of Education – *This is intended for early education, but has a lot of good ideas.*
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/earlymath/index.html

New Jersey Math Coalition
http://dimacs.rutgers.edu/nj_math_coalition/pguide/pguide.html

Encouraging Your Child's Math Talent: The Involved Parents' Guide. *This is intended for parents of gifted children.*
http://www.amazon.com/Encouraging-Your-Childs-Math-Talent/dp/1593631847/sr=8-9/qid=1161613690/ref=sr_1_9/002-0423091-2107223?ie=UTF8&s=books