



How Can I help My Child with Math? Tips for Families of English Language Learners

Parents and caregivers are essential partners in helping their children succeed in school. The evidence is clear that when you are interested in and encourage learning, no matter what the subject, your attitude affects your child's educational success. This is especially true of math. Parental and caregiver involvement in mathematics education shows children that the adults in their lives care about what they are doing and learning, and that they value a good education. Parents and caregivers are also in the unique position to help their children see how math relates to their real lives ... and that every-day math can be fun! Remember, you are your child's first math teacher – and as you will see below, you really can help your child succeed in math.

Use First Language:

If you and your child are more comfortable in a language other than English, use it. Your child will understand math concepts better in the language that he or she knows best. If your child understands the concept in their first language they can easily transfer that knowledge and understanding to English.

In addition to talking about and solving math problems in your first language, use your first language to build dual language math word lists. Google translate or a bilingual dictionary may assist with this.

For example:

English	Ukrainian	Picture/Symbol
Adding	додаванн	+
Subtracting	віднімання	-

Be Positive:

Build strong, positive attitudes about math. When children feel positively engaged and successful, they are more likely to stick with an activity or a problem to find a solution. Students who believe that math is important for their future will be more motivated to learn math.

Use praise such as “it is great that you have learned that” or “I really like your thinking in this question”. When they tell you something is hard for them, or they have made a mistake, tell them: “That’s wonderful, your brain is growing!” Be relaxed and if your child becomes frustrated, remind them of things that they have already learned to do successfully, like riding a bike.

Motivation:

You can motivate your child's math learning by supporting math homework. Have a set homework time and routine. Create a homework tool kit by collecting math tools like pencils, rulers, counters (beans or beads) scissors, and paper.

Begin with activities that meet your child’s level of mathematical understanding. Early success in solving problems will build your child’s confidence. Gradually move to activities that provide more challenge for your child.

Math in Everyday Activities:

Help your child see math in everyday activities and build on their love of games. Try the following:

1. Math Games and Puzzles can show that math is fun! Play games such as cards, dice, dominoes, backgammon, and building blocks with you child.
2. Ask for your child’s help to count items in your home. “I wonder how many chairs we have around the table? In this room? In the house?” Count windows, light switches, lamps or beds. You might record “how many” by using a combination of numbers and pictures.
3. Math at the Grocery Store - When you are shopping, have your child keep a running total of how much you are spending by using prices that he or she rounds up or rounds down. For a challenge, set a limit on the amount of money you will spend.
4. Your child will find patterns in clothing, in wallpaper, in tiles, on toys and among trees and flowers. Encourage your child to describe the patterns found. Have your child try to identify the features of the pattern that repeat.

References:

Kindergarten to Grade 6, A Parent Guide Doing Mathematics with Your Child
http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/parent_engagement-math/en/

Inspiring your child to learn and love math, K - Gr 8
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/parentGuideNumEn.pdf>

On-line Resources:

Ministry of Education Tip Sheets in 15 different languages including math. http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/multiLanguages.htm	Kindergarten to Grade 6, A Parent Guide Doing Mathematics with Your Child, http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/parentGuideNumEn.pdf	Mathies - a website for Ontario K-12 students and parents http://oame.on.ca/mathies/
Family Math Canada familymathcanada.org	On-line math dictionary http://www.amathsdictionaryforkids.com/dictionary.html	TVOKids - resources to support learning at home http://homeworkzone.tvokids.com/hwz/math
Sumdog https://www.sumdog.com/	Prodigy https://www.prodigygame.com/	Kahoot https://kahoot.it/