

Help your teen succeed in math

For parents of secondary school students

Congratulations!

One of the strongest factors that has been scientifically proven to predict student success in school is parental involvement. So today you have already taken a big step to help your teen succeed in math just by showing an interest and finding out more information!

Communication is always the key

There are four main things to remember about communication:

Communication at home

Talk to your teen about what is going on in his math class. Don't just focus on the topics that are being covered, but also on how your teen is feeling about the topics and his math skills in general. Often dislike is used to cover up discomfort. So if your teen says he doesn't like a particular topic, it may be because he is having trouble with it and could really use some extra help.

Math is like a pyramid: a firm understanding of the topics studied at higher levels requires a strong and broad foundation. If there are gaps in the foundation, it can lead to a shaky grasp of new material. It's never too late to go back and deepen your understanding of a foundational topic, like fractions. Everyone wants to do well, however, we all need a little encouragement from time to time. Let your teen know that with a little help she can learn that stubborn math topic.

Make sure that your teen writes all the dates for quizzes, tests and assignments in his agenda or in the calendar in his electronic device, such as a cell phone. Every day when you look at his agenda you can record these dates on your calendar so that you can check in with him to see how he is progressing. There are several benefits of using an electronic calendar, such as the automatic reminders that can be set up, or

that some calendars can be shared and are accessible from just about anywhere.

Good communication

There are all kinds of communication, but sometimes how something is said is more important than what is being said. Many people have strong feelings about math, and they are not always good. In general, be as positive about math as possible. A **“can-do” attitude improves chances for success**. Support doesn't have to be answering math questions. Showing interest and offering advice on work and study habits are also good ways to encourage your teen.

Communication in the classroom

One of the largest differences, besides all the technology and manipulatives, between a math class twenty years ago and one today is an increase in the amount of words used to solve a problem. Communication is a key focus in all of today's math classrooms. This is, in part, because of the curriculum's focus on real life skills. What good is it if you can come up with the answer to an everyday problem if you can't explain it to anyone?

Students are often not as successful as they could be because they communicate their answers poorly. When your teen does her homework, go over her answers together and look especially at the amount and quality of what she wrote. Ask her to verbally explain her answers to you in more detail. Then help her write out the more detailed explanations. Encourage her to use lots of words as well as diagrams, formulas, graphs, charts, and well set out calculations.

Communication with the school

Talk to your teen's teacher at the beginning of the semester. Let the teacher know that you want to be kept informed about how your son is doing in math class. Give the teacher your contact information on a piece of paper. Include a daytime phone number and an e-mail address if possible, as a teacher can often send off a quick note to keep you updated on new developments.

Encourage your teen to talk to her teacher about her progress. Let your teen know that you expect her to show an interest in her own progress, as her education is a group effort with her at the lead. Find out together what topics your daughter will cover by visiting the Ministry of Education's website (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum>) and look at the curriculum for the correct grade and level of mathematics. There you can also discover how she will be graded by reading the Achievement Chart for the math curriculum. In addition, take a look at the information from the course outline provided by your teen's teacher.

Homework is the most important part of any mathematics program. **Math is just like any skill: practice makes perfect.** Work at home, or "homework", should be done every day, even if all the assigned questions are already completed. Your teen should be practicing his math skills on a regular basis by reading his notes and his textbook, and going over old questions and assessments. Preparing for a test is not something that should only be done the night before. When your teen habitually works backwards and looks forwards he will be able to take the "surprise" out of a surprise quiz since he will always be prepared. What a wonderful feeling that is!

All kinds of levels

Discuss your teen's short and long-term goals. Her post secondary plans will affect which math courses she will take in high school. There are three levels which lead down different paths. A common misconception is that taking an applied or workplace level math means your daughter won't be able to attend university. **This is not true!** Furthermore, being in the correct level will not only make her

math class more relevant to her, but will also help ensure that she earns the credits that she needs.

Where else can you find help?

The Peel board's website (www.peelschools.org) is an excellent resource offering homework help, math practice and a list of other useful sites. Just click on the links for Parents or for Students.

Most schools offer a program called *Counting on You*. This board program runs after school and offers help in numeracy, including preparation for the grade 9 EQAO math test, and literacy, for the grade 10 EQAO literacy test. Contact your school for details.

Most importantly...

No one can do well on an assessment that isn't completed. **Being present is the most important thing.** Work done with technology or manipulatives, as well as investigations and cooperative learning is difficult, sometimes almost impossible, to reproduce outside of the classroom.

Lastly, a good night's sleep and a good attitude, along with a pencil, eraser, ruler and calculator are excellent tools to have for math class. Being there and being on time ensures that your teen won't miss out on the vital instructions and teaching points that are the key to reaching your teen's full mathematical potential.

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