

Supporting Common Core State Standards

Ask parents to promote reading and writing at home

One of the biggest changes students may notice with the Common Core State Standards is the increased emphasis on reading and writing across the curriculum. Parents can play an important role in strengthening your students' reading and writing muscles at home.

Below is an article to insert in your school's newsletter. A Microsoft® Word version is available on the CD included in your binder.



Four ways to build reading and writing skills

Your child may notice a greater emphasis on reading and writing in all of his classes with the Common Core State Standards. That's because reading and writing are keys to success in school for students of all ages. Children who are good readers and writers find it easier to do well in other subjects—because so much of learning depends on the ability to read and write.

Here's how to put reading and writing at the heart of your home:

1. **Set a good example.** Let your child see you reading and writing. Read magazines, cookbooks, manuals and books. Make lists, write letters, write in a journal and even write notes to your child.
2. **Have fun with reading and writing.** Keep a variety of reading materials for your child in your home. Create a cozy reading spot. Set up a "writing corner" near a comfortable chair. Keep a basket filled with jazzy paper, colored pens and envelopes.
3. **Make reading and writing a priority.** In some families, one night a week is set aside as a "reading dinner" when everyone brings a book to the table to discuss. In other families, there's a reading and writing time just before bed.
4. **Share reading strategies.** Show your child how to skim a passage or article before he reads it. Have him look at the headlines, subheads and graphics for ideas about what the passage is about. Check with your child's teacher for other strategies to reinforce.

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Eleven strategies for middle & high school math success

The Common Core State Standards for Mathematics have a strong emphasis on problem solving. Students will be expected to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. While you may not understand what your child learns in math this year, you can still support her learning. Share these simple techniques to help your child do better in math:

- 1 Remember.** When your child sees a new problem, he should think about old problems. What has he done that was similar? Did he use a formula? Can he use the same one here?
- 2 Read ahead.** If the teacher is going to talk about chapter four tomorrow, have your child read it tonight. Then have her try to solve some problems in that chapter. She may realize what she doesn't understand. This will help her pay close attention in class the next day.
- 3 Ask questions.** Most kids are hesitant to ask a question in class. Remind your child that if he has a question, there are probably others who are wondering the same thing.
- 4 Understand mistakes.** The only way to avoid repeating mistakes is to understand why they were made in the first place. So when your child gets a test back, she should rework any problems she answered incorrectly. She should take time to figure out her thinking behind the mistake, and then figure out how to do it correctly. If she is unclear, she should ask the teacher.
- 5 Use hands-on tools.** Encourage your child to use manipulatives to help him visualize math problems. For example, he could use cutouts of shapes for help with geometry.
- 6 Find a partner.** Encourage your child to team up with another student who is strong in math. Together, they can figure out the problems.
- 7 Do homework every day.** Math builds on what was taught before. Don't fall behind. If your child slacks off, he will have a hard time catching up.
- 8 Use graph paper.** Some kids are great at lining up numbers. Others are not—and end up making careless mistakes. Encourage your child to use graph paper for math. This results in more organized work—and fewer errors.
- 9 Use color.** Math includes the use of many different symbols. Have your child try marking percentages in yellow and decimals in blue, for example. This may cut down on confusion.
- 10 Use catchy reminders.** Remembering “My Dear Aunt Sally” has helped many students recall that they should Multiply and Divide before they Add and Subtract. Your child can ask her teacher for more suggestions.
- 11 Use the Internet.** Does your child need extra practice on a skill? Sometimes online math games can help students review. Your child's teacher may be able to recommend good sites to visit.

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Build your child's math skills

The Mathematics Standards of the Common Core focus on helping students develop a deep understanding of math concepts. A key to your child's success will be his ability to apply what he knows to solve real-world problems. With your help, your child can develop the skills and attitude he needs to be successful in math.

Be positive

Research shows that parents' attitudes have a lot to do with how well their children do in math. Kids who enjoy math do better in it. But kids whose parents tell them they didn't like math when they were in school, not surprisingly, often have trouble in math. Encourage your child to do her best in math and let her know you believe she can do well.

Go on a math walk

When you walk in your neighborhood, count the number of animals, birds, fire hydrants or green cars you see. Look for geometric shapes—circles, right angles, cones and so on—in the windows and buildings. Estimate how far you'll walk—later, perhaps you can check with a car odometer.

Ask silly questions

Try making math fun by asking silly questions that require math to answer them: "How many minutes is it until your birthday?" "What percent of the pizza did Dad eat tonight?" After you ask the question, ask your child how she could find the answer. Have her solve the problem with pencil and paper or a calculator. Challenge each other to think of new fun questions.

Get cooking

When preparing meals, let your child help with weighing and measuring. Discuss sizes, shapes and fractions. Find answers to questions such as, "How could we double this recipe?" and, "When we add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, what do we get?"

Go grocery shopping

Bring a calculator with you and have your child keep a running tally of purchases. Use coupons to inspire math problems also. "If we use this coupon, will the product cost less than other brands?" "Which of these items is really the best deal per pound?"

Take a road trip

Calculate how many miles you'll go. If you're driving, how much gas will you use? In the car, say a number between 1 and 10. Who can find a license plate with numbers that add up to the number you called out?

Play games

Card games like "Go Fish" and "Gin Rummy" teach counting, sorting and strategy. Try a game with dice, too. Throw two to six dice. Have your child add the number of dots. Keep each player's score on paper. The first player to get a certain score (50, 100 or 500) wins.

