



Southwest Middle School

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Dear Family,

Are you wondering how you can help your child succeed in mathematics? Here are some practical ideas for helping students with math homework and learning more about the strategies students are using!

Why does this math look different?

Computations are only one part of mathematics. Mathematics is also about communicating, making connections, and finding ways to solve real-world problems. We need students who can persevere in thinking about a problem and attempt a solution, ask good questions, understand that there are different ways to solve a problem, and communicate their solutions to others.

Some instructional methods you are seeing in your student’s mathematics materials may be unfamiliar to you. These newer methods are helping students make connections to concepts they have already learned to strengthen their understanding before we move on to something new. Research has shown that making these connections is an important step in developing strong mathematics foundations.

How can you help your student with math homework?

It’s important for your student to spend time thinking about problems and trying different things to arrive at a solution—even if that student is struggling. Make sure the student does not give up too easily. If there is really struggle praise the student’s efforts and encourage trying to figure it out. Mistakes are okay because we learn from them. Research has shown that children often better retain what they have learned after continuing to think about a problem, even when they wanted to give up.

Rather than trying to show your student how to solve a problem, encourage trying each one. Ask guiding questions that get the student to take time to think about the problem and make connections to what is already known. Below are some possible questions you might ask.

Questions to ask your student about homework problems:

“Your solution is really interesting. Explain to me what you did.” (*If your student says, “I don’t know,” say “Well, tell me what you do know.”*)

“Can you explain this part more specifically?”

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THINK COLLEGE

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“How did you decide what strategy to use?”	“Is there another way to solve the problem?”
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If your student is stuck, ask questions like:	
“What is the problem about?”	“Can you draw a picture to represent this problem?”
“What is the problem asking you to find?”	“What have you tried? What steps did you take?”
“How is this related to the problems you have been working on in class?”	“What could you try next?”
“What information is important? Why?”	

If desired, write a quick note or email to the teacher (or have your student do it if old enough) describing the problems your student struggled with the most and how much effort was put into the assignment.

Where can you learn more?

- Each lesson in *Ready* includes a Family Letter explaining the mathematics concepts being taught that week. Read these letters and do the activities on the back with your student, as time allows. Please contact me if you have not been receiving these letters or would like extra copies.

I hope this letter has provided helpful background for helping you understand your student’s mathematics instruction as well as resources to assist you with supporting your student with math homework.

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