

Tips For Success

Designate a Space for Success



Working space - a well-lit desk, the kitchen table, or a cubby at the local library

Close access to materials - paper, pens, pencils, computer, well-organized binder, calculator, dictionary, curriculum, including textbooks, etc. Some students will store all their books and materials in a cubbie or tote.

Minimal distractions - regulate distractions that would interfere with thinking and processing time. Distractions are siblings, friends, or pets that interrupt the learning process, sound distractions such as the television, cell phones, video games, or visual distractions such as busy activity in the vicinity.

Manage Time Effectively

Daily routine - Children and adults of all ages function better with a predictable routine. Map out a schedule with the help of your Education Specialist to get the desired amount of work done each day. Schedules look different to suit the child and family's needs. Examples: Folders for each day with one side "To Do" and the other side "Done", a one page weekly summary with all subjects, daily plan on the whiteboard, etc. Schedule time for breaks, recess, and independent reading time are another important part of the day.

Time requirements - A regular school day should minimally take at least 5 hours for elementary students a day. While some days may be less, that should be the exception, not the rule. If your child is getting done in an hour or two, then a review of curriculum and difficulty should be made.

Planning/Grading Time – For students to be successful they need feedback on how they are doing. Scheduling daily time to grade math and language arts assignments and weekly time to grade other work and then returning that work for correction is essential to a child's development.



Schedule your week for success - Plan appointments, community classes, and / or errands after school has finished. Starting school first thing in the morning works well for most families. Careful consideration should be given to any activity that takes you out of the house on a consistent basis early in the day. For most families, school would suffer.

Negotiations - Do not allow negotiations to take place about the assigned work. As the learning coach, you are responsible to establish expectations and be firm with the assignments.



Sample Daily Schedule

7:30 – 8:15 Breakfast and morning chores

8:15 – 8:30 Handwriting (Students can warm-up their day by getting handwriting out of the way while the learning coach finishes up getting ready for school).

8:30 - 9:30 Math

9:30 - 10:30 Language arts

10:30 - 10:45 Break & Snack

10:45 - 11:15 PE (Exercise is really important to help the brain stay alert through the rest of the day).

11:15 - 12:00 Science/social studies (social studies on Mon. & Wed., science on Tues. & Thurs.)

12:00 - 12:30 Lunch & “recess”

12:30 - 1:30 Art, technology, health, music

(Mon. - health, Tues. - technology, Wed. - art, Thurs. - music)

1:30 - 2:30 Independent reading time

Students should have at least 20 - 60+ minutes of independent reading every day:

20 - 30 minutes for younger students (1st-2nd grade)

30 - 40 minutes for middle elementary (3rd-4th grade)

40 - 60 minutes for upper elementary (5th-6th grade)



3:00 –homework or unfinished work from earlier in the day.

Please note: ***While the schedule can flip around (language arts before math), the minimum number of instructional hours (6) each day must stay the same.***

MATH MAKES YOUR LIFE ADD UP!

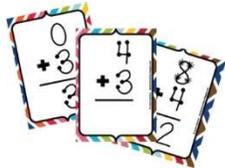
What does it take to make my student good at math?

"I'm just not good at math," is an excuse. Research shows that people with that excuse and corresponding math anxiety will tend to avoid math situations and even math-related career paths (From When People Worry about Math by William Harms, University of Chicago). Math does not have to be a mystery that produces anxiety. Math proficiency takes work. However it does require hard work and implementing the following traits consistently to produce excellence in mathematics with little stress or fear.



They are:

1. **Mastering facts** – If students do not know their math facts, every step of mathematics becomes more difficult.



"If your brain doesn't have to work as hard on simple math, it has more working memory free to process the teacher's brand-new lesson on more complex math." ("Kids' Brains Reorganize When Learning Math Skills," *Education*, August 2014). In early years, manipulatives are an important part of learning math facts.

2. **Organization** – Mistakes are made when work is messy and disorganized.

Neat work makes math easier and consequently there are **less mistakes**. A good recommendation is using graph paper to make columns and work neater. ("The essence of mathematics is not to make simple things complicated but to make complicated things simple." ~S. Gudder)

3. **Practice** – Students should plan to spend at least 60 minutes a day on math.

(exception: kindergarten)

"There is an interesting connection between learning math and science, and learning a sport. When you learn how to swing a golf club, you perfect that swing from lots of repetition over a period of years. Your body knows what to do from a single thought-one chunk-instead of having to recall all the complex steps involved in hitting the ball." ("How I rewired my Brain to Become Fluent in Math: Sorry Education Reformers, It's Still Memorization and Repetition We Need." *Nautilus Quarterly*, Fall 2014) Just like any sport, proper consistent practice makes perfect.

The only way
to **learn**
mathematics
is to **do**
mathematics.

PAUL HALMOS

4. **Frequent Review** – Math should be reviewed consistently to internalize the concepts taught.

Just because a child understood a concept one day, they can forget it the next. "The problem with focusing relentlessly on understanding is that math and science students can often grasp essentials of an important idea, but this understanding can quickly slip away...through practice and repetition. Worse, students often believe they understand something when, in fact, they don't. By championing the importance of understanding, teachers can inadvertently set their students up for failure... As one (failing) engineering student recently told me: 'I just don't see how I could have done so poorly. I understood it when you taught it in class.' My student may have thought he understood it at the time, and perhaps he did, but he never practiced using the



concept to truly internalize it." ("How I rewired my Brain to Become Fluent in Math: Sorry Education Reformers, It's Still Memorization and Repetition We Need." *Nautilus Quarterly*, Fall 2014) **A program like IXL or frequent review of past concepts are what is needed to internalize math understanding.**

5. **Correction** – Correction and feedback and redoing work are all crucial to student success in math.



One of the frequent mistakes we see is failure to correct assignments and figure out what went wrong. A parent grading daily work, having the student make corrections, re-grading, and returning the assignment until it is done accurately is **crucial to success in math**. It's hard to do it right when you never correct what went wrong. Learning to solve things a different way is part of correction. Students who can check their work by solving a different way will be more successful at mathematics.

6. **Puzzles and Games** – Math games, mental math, and puzzles make math fun.

Students who play math games and do math puzzles are more likely to feel comfortable with mental math and therefore feel more comfortable with numbers. Math is associated with fun and solving the puzzle and not just with abstract concepts. Besides playing games like Yahtzee and solving brain teasers, having real-world problems that need a solution get students engaged in math.



7. **Math Vocabulary** – Speaking the math language is important to understanding math.

"Vocabulary knowledge is as essential to learning mathematics as it is to learning how to read." ("Vocabulary Strategies for the Mathematics Classroom," *Houghton Mifflin*)

8. **Student Attitude** – Basically saying, "I'm not good at math and so I never will be is a dangerous thing."

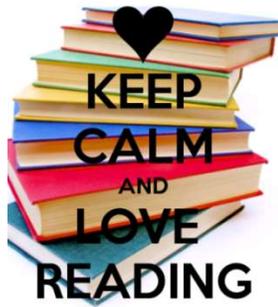


Not surprisingly, students who say they want to improve in math are more likely to make improvement than those that say, "I'm just not good at math." A study of students who have severe math anxiety found through brain scans that doing the math itself was not what produced the anxiety but the *anticipation of doing math* is what the brain found painful. "Basically saying, "I'm not good at math and so I never will be" — is a dangerous thing. When someone with [this attitude] about learning math gets a math problem wrong, they think it's just an indication of the poor math ability they were "born with," according to a study published in [Personality and Individual Differences](#) in 2010. This can have a very negative impact on motivation. If we don't believe we can improve, we won't bother trying." ("I'm not a Math Person, No Longer a Valid Excuse," *Business Insider*, Nov. 2013).

9. **Teacher Attitude** – One of the best things you can do for your child is to approach each lesson and day with a good attitude toward the subject.

Studies show that parent anxiety often transmits to their children ("When People Worry about Math, the Brain Feels the Pain." *University of Chicago*, 2015). When parents treat math like a daily root canal, that attitude is obvious to children and they will hate math as well. One of the best things you can do for your child is to approach each lesson and day with a good attitude toward the subject. That alone will make a huge difference in your child's life.





What does it take to be a good reader?

1. Phonics – Organized and consistent phonics instruction is crucial for students with reading, spelling, writing, and overall literacy.

The definition of *phonics* is an understanding that there is a relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. In Australia, the committee for the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy produced the report 'Teaching Reading' (2005). The committee concluded: "The evidence is clear... that direct systematic instruction in phonics during the early

years of schooling is an essential foundation for teaching children to read." The study further asserted that when there is little to no consistent phonics instruction that children's literacy suffers, along with "reading accuracy, decoding, fluency, writing, spelling and comprehension." ("The Importance of Phonics: Securing Confident Reading."

<http://www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/curriculum/assessment/download/file/3.pdf>)



2. Read Aloud to by an Adult – Reading aloud to students not only makes them better readers but allows a connection as everyone shares the excitement, emotion, fun, or suspense of a book.



"At the beginning level, read-alouds give children input in the form of stories, helping them acquire the language of books, and they also stimulate interest in reading." "Read aloud to your students. When you move to a new genre, a new author, or a new topic, read aloud. When you begin a new novel with students, read aloud the first few pages. Skilled readers not only "see" the text, but they hear it. The most disfluent readers I've worked with tell me that they not only don't see the text, but they can't hear it. (Ferlazzo, Larry &

Stephen Krashen/Kylene Beers. "Response: Ways to Help Our Students Become Better Readers." *Education Week Teacher*, Feb. 2012).

3. Independent Reading (10 min x grade level) – In order for kids to become readers, time needs to be set aside for them to BE readers and to develop a love of reading. They need access to a print-rich environment. A good rule of thumb is a minimum of 10 minutes of reading per grade level a book of the child's choice.

Kids need time to read the books they choose, in school and at home. This time allows them time to get into a book and develop a passion for reading. Malcolm Gladwell theorizes in *Outliers* (2008) that it takes "ten thousand hours of practice for an expert to acquire his or her expertise. When we dedicate regular class time to students living vicariously in stories, and when we assign pleasure reading as baseline, priority, nightly homework, students begin to acquire the kind of experience that leads to increased fluency, understanding, vocabulary, and stamina. My students read an average of fifty-three books representing a dozen genres last year, and they are wizard readers--and critics." While a home doesn't have to have a lot of books, trips to the library, access to newspapers, magazines, and other print are important. One good suggestion for getting students into a variety of books is to suggest the reward after reading a book is to watch the movie based on the book and compare the two. Make the "reward movie" a special event that the child can get excited is coming. (Ferlazzo, Larry & Nancie Atwell. "Response: Ways to Help Our Students Become Better Readers." *Education Week Teacher*, Feb. 2012).



4. Reading Comprehension – Children need to be taught HOW to comprehend text when reading. Teaching them reading strategies is important to help them understand what they are reading.

Comprehension is the ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read. “All readers need mentors to learn from, and to some degree, every teacher can be a mentor when it comes to comprehension instruction. Take a minute to consider what you do to comprehend. Do you reread the entire text or only selected parts based on a specific purpose? Do you hold your thinking by filling out worksheets or by annotating text? Do you demonstrate your comprehension by turning in a graphic organizer or do you actually use it to complete a task? Do your questions drive what you read or do you read to answer someone else's questions? Showing kids the authentic ways you interact with text will not only encourage them to read more, it will also give them power and independence to think in your class.” (Ferlazzo, Larry & Cris Tovani. “Response: Ways to Help Our Students Become Better Readers.” *Education Week Teacher*, Feb. 2012)



5. Sight Words - Sight word recognition improves reading fluency and automaticity, allowing the student to focus their efforts on the more mentally demanding task of reading comprehension.

Students become efficient and confident readers and their attention can now center on decoding words that carry meaning to the text. This allows students to focus their efforts on “reading to learn” rather than “learning to read.” As a result, their ability to verbally recall and organize information from text drastically improves. These students not only begin to develop reading comprehension skills, but also become more accurate, detailed, and organized when verbally recalling the information. (<http://www.teachstix.com/the-importance-of-sight-words>)



6. Vocabulary – Communicate with children using a diverse vocabulary. Teach them the meaning of the words so they can grow their vocabulary.



Vocabulary plays an important part in learning to read. Beginning readers must use the words they hear orally to make sense of the words they see in print. Kids who hear more words spoken at home learn more words and enter school with better vocabularies. This larger vocabulary pays off exponentially as a child progresses through school. Vocabulary also is very important to reading comprehension. Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean. As children learn to read more advanced texts, they must learn the meaning of new words that are not part of their oral vocabulary. (from Reading Rockets)