

Planning 4 Math Success

From the Transition Math Project “Figure It Out” Presentation for Parents, available online at: [ADD URL](#)
Brochure available at: http://www.transitionmathproject.org/marketing_toolkit/math_4_success_21mar07.pdf

Plan It Out

Having a plan helps students select high level math courses fitting their future education goals, and ultimately, get into their college or program of choice without remediation. Here are some straightforward steps to use a plan to your student’s advantage:

Encourage your child to enroll in junior and senior year math courses – current math graduation requirement doesn’t necessarily ensure preparedness for college!

Washington State public high school students are required to have a “High School & Beyond” plan in order to graduate. Use a template of this document to help your student plan out courses in high school (see suggested steps below for details): <http://www.k12.wa.us/navigation101/Curriculum2007-08/NavGr08/Nav0815Rev0807.pdf>

1. Talk to college admissions *early* (9th grade) about sequences of courses for a specific program or major.
2. Look at career search engines to find out the desired level of education in broad professional categories. Here’s a couple to visit:
 - Career Voyages: <http://www.careervoyages.gov/>
 - Bureau of Labor Statistics – Kid’s Page: <http://www.bls.gov/k12/index.htm>
 - Workforce Explorer Washington – Career Center: <http://www.workforceexplorer.com/cgi/career/?PAGEID=3>
3. Complete a family version of the “High School & Beyond” plan (**family plan**) to discuss your child’s college or work aspirations and the courses needed to reach them. Post it in a high traffic location in your home to remind everyone of its importance.
4. Use the **family plan** to ensure your child selects appropriate math classes each semester.
5. Develop a partnership with your child’s teachers and counselors – share your **family plan** with them, ask them to help you show your child how their subject matter relates to their future goals, and compare your **family plan** to the version he or she will create at school.

Speak It Out

Communicating with school officials and advocacy groups elevates math education issues, and improves local and statewide policy and practice. Here are some ways your involvement can improve math education for your child, and for all children:

Ask school and district officials, school boards and math teachers how they are aligning math courses with the **College Readiness Standards**. Discuss the Transition Math Project and the College Readiness Standards with other parents and your Parent Teacher Association (PTA) –share ideas to encourage math success and reduce remediation.

Washington State PTA website: <http://www.wastatepta.org>
Office of the Education Ombudsman: <http://www.governor.wa.gov/oeo/>
Washington Chapter of the Appleseed Network: http://www.waappleseed.org/child_welfare.shtml

Support efforts to increase math credit graduation requirements and to require math in the senior year of high school.

Build consensus among school officials, teachers, your school’s math department, other parents and PTA to “speak” the same message to students about math’s relevance to their future educations, professions, and lifestyles.

Carry It Out

Research shows that attitudes and routines do make a tremendous difference in student confidence and the ability to learn. Here are some ways you can make math positive and relevant for your child:

Communicate to your child that you expect him or her to achieve success in math.

Talk positively about math – examine how your own attitude or anxiety about math may be impacting your child. Point out when math is being used in an activity both you and your child enjoys, including games, hobbies, sports, music, cooking, shopping...

Show your child how math helps you make important family decisions, including making major purchases, preparing taxes, setting budgets, comparing costs, etc.

EXERCISE Alleviate your own math anxiety by using a “reverse tutoring” technique to empower your student. This can help you pinpoint where he or she may need specific help from the teacher (such as not understanding a formula, missing part of a classroom lecture, difficulty with a textbook, and so on).

Practice the fundamentals: have your student make a list of frequently used formulas; ask him or her to tutor younger siblings; set up tutoring or math labs/networks with peers.

Make healthy homework habits part of your student’s overall routine:

- Get enough sleep and exercise;
- DON'T put off homework until late at night (major cause of stress for everyone!)
- Develop an organization system for homework that makes sense to your student
- Make a location in your home conducive to homework – well organized, plenty of supplies and space, and no/low distractions
- Review all the extracurricular demands on your child’s life – decide together what supports or takes away from academic success

Reach Out

You ARE an important member of your child’s math team, and can support your child (and teachers!) with specific, proactive communication with your school throughout the school year:

Know how to reach an administrator or teacher to help everyone respond to your child’s needs promptly(not just at conference time):

- When do they have department meetings parents can attend?
- Do they set up individual appointments?
- When are they available to talk to you by telephone?
- Do they have email accounts?

Talk to your child about specific difficulties or achievements in math before and after conference time, and regularly share your child’s perspective with the teacher.

Bring a written list of questions to parent-teacher conferences that you can refer to as the year progresses, including:

- What can I expect my child to learn this year? Do you have a schedule for assignments and tests?
- Does your curriculum support the College Readiness Standards and Grade Level Expectations endorsed by Washington State?
- How does this math prepare my child for college-level mathematics?
- What does a test or unit cover?
- What student performance data are available? How will the school use data for individual grading and reporting overall class progress?
- How can I participate in and out classroom in my child’s learning? What positive actions or messages support the math department?

Acquaint yourself with the Student Attributes described in the College Readiness Standards, and evaluate with your child’s teacher if he or she is demonstrating these qualities in the classroom, and at home.

If you have math anxiety, ask the teacher for tips to support what is happening in the classroom at home. You can work with other parents to form academic support groups, too.

Advocate your child as an education consumer – make sure the learning environment fosters a sense of security, and doesn’t prevent your child from asking questions or seeking help.

More Resources

Transition Math Project – Math Lab: http://www.transitionmathproject.org/math_lab.asp

Additional Help for Parents – math resource clearinghouse: http://www.transitionmathproject.org/math_lab_2007/parent_help07.asp

All Kinds of Minds (reasons and tips to help students learn math in their own way):

<http://www.allkindsofminds.org/ptk/mathDifficulties.aspx>

College Readiness Standards – Student Attributes: http://www.transitionmathproject.org/math_lab/succeed.asp

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction – current math standards: <http://www.k12.wa.us/>