

**MAKE
IT MATH**

   

Spread the Word!

Tools for Families & Advocates

CREATED BY FAMILIES





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Dear Parent / Caregiver,

You know that math is important for your child. You're having fun and talking about math at home. You've even brought math into the community with you, modeling math talk and including other children and families while you're out and about. Congratulations—you're part of the Family Math movement!

Why is Family Math Important?

- Early math skills will help children in school.
- It can predict future achievements, including earning a high school and college diploma.
- Math skills will lay the foundation for strong job opportunities in adulthood.
- Math fosters creativity and develops critical thinking.
- Math is fun! It's good for you, and you can enjoy it together.

Do you know other families who could benefit from Family Math? We need your help to spread the word!

This toolkit offers a few simple ideas about how you can help spread the word about Family Math. These ideas are organized into three categories:

- 1. Circle of Control:** These are the areas you have direct control over, specifically including your own actions.
- 2. Circle of Influence:** These are the areas where you can make a difference—for example, with your extended family, your community, and your child's school.
- 3. Circle of Power:** When we all come together, we've arrived in the circle of power.

Welcome to the Family Math Movement. Let's have some fun together.

Sincerely,

NAFSCE Family Math Advisory Council



Circle of Control

Your circle of control is small and powerful! It encompasses your personal actions. How can you have fun and talk to your child about math? There are lots of ways!

Family Math at Home

The "Math at Home" section of our *Family Math Activities & Resources* toolkit has ideas for enjoying Family Math in the kitchen, while doing laundry, at bedtime, and other places at home. Give these ideas a try, and make note of how you're already doing Family Math at home.

- What can you keep doing?
- What can you start doing?
- How can math be fun in every room in your home?
- You are a leader for Family Math in your own family. How are you already leading this effort?

Family Math in the Community

The "Math in the Community" section of our *Family Math Activities & Resources* toolkit has ideas for bringing Family Math into the community—from restaurants, to the library, to the post office (and even on the drive there)!

- Which of these activities are you already doing?
- What new ones can you try?
- How can you model Family Math when you're out in your community with your child?



Family Math on Social Media

- Is your child having fun with math? Share it on social media!
- Take a video of your child playing a math game. Have them explain what they're doing.
- Share one of your "I wonder..." questions and your child's response.
- In the caption, include ways you strengthen your child's math skills every day.
- Grab a picture of your child playing with shapes or arranging things into categories, then describe how what they're doing is math.
- Use our hashtags—we want to see what you're up to! #mathislove #FamilyMath #makeitmath

Take the Pledge

At the end of this toolkit, we've included a few materials you can print out to help with your Family Math journey. One of them is a pledge: "I promise to do my best to do math every day with my child." With that pledge comes a set of ideas on how to make this happen.

Feeling Overwhelmed?

The way schools teach math may be different than the way you learned it. This adds another layer of anxiety for many families. We know how you feel! The good news is that the math itself is the same, it's just the method that's different. Think of ways to share your methods at home and in your neighborhood with your child's teacher.

- **Ask your child to explain their homework to you.** Let your child be the teacher! Allow them to explain what they're doing and why. Not only will it help you understand the new methods they're using, it will also help your child learn the lesson more completely by talking through it with you.
- **Get help from additional resources or other parents.** From videos on YouTube to the resources linked throughout our Family Math Activities & Resources toolkit, there is a lot of additional help available. You can also call on your fellow parents!
- **Attitude matters.** Your child can sense how you feel about math. If you're feeling anxious and frustrated, they can start to feel that way, too. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed while helping your child with math, take a deep breath. Take a break. Get help if you need it.

Support the Movement

Our *Family Math Activities & Resources* toolkit offers many ways you can incorporate Family Math into your everyday lives. Here are two more ways you can support Family Math:

- **Vote:** Let your commitment to education and Family Math show at the ballot box. Vote or advocate for candidates and causes that make math and early learning a priority.
- **Participate in the Census:** The United States Census takes place every ten years, and it's important that every person living in the country is counted. These counts determine Congressional representation, impact billions of dollars of government funding, and provide data for key community decisions. Be counted! The census is also a great Family Math conversation-starter to use with your children.
 - "This happens every ten years. How many is ten?"
 - "How many people are in our family? Let's count together."
 - "I wonder how many people live on our street? In our neighborhood? In our state? In the whole country?"
 - [This activity from the U.S. Census](#) explores counting and what you can do with those numbers.



Circle of Influence

Although you can't control the actions of other people, you can let them know that Family Math is important to you and your family, and why! Your circle of influence encompasses your family, friends, neighbors, community, local businesses, and your child's school. Here are some ways to let them know about Family Math.

Talk to Your Child About Math

Yes, including your child in conversations about math is part of spreading the word! Here are a few questions to get a math conversation started with your child:

- What do you enjoy about math?
- What is challenging about math?
- How is math part of your favorite game?
- How did you use math today?
- How is math part of your favorite game?

Talk to Friends and Family

When you and your child visit a friend or family member's home, talk about math with your child in front of them.

- Explain what you're doing and why: "Did you know that categories are math?"
- Ask your child to show the friend or family member their counting skills.



- Have your child explain how you do math in the kitchen at home.
- Invite friends and family to use math talk with your child. "Why are you using a half cup of flour instead of a full cup?" "Why do you have three new stools, not two or four?"
- Ask family and friends what some of their "I wonder..." questions are. Write them into this Toolkit.
- How do your family and friends use math every day? Ask them and invite your child to join the conversation.

Talk About Family Math in Your Community

In the "Math in the Community" section of our *Family Math Activities & Resources* toolkit, we offered suggestions for collaboration in several community locations. Try these ideas in some of the places you frequently visit:

- Can small businesses use math talk with children? Can they post prompts and ideas to get more families talking about math with their children?
- How can your faith community incorporate math? How is math part of your beliefs?
- Can your local buses or trains post signs encouraging math talk?
- Could your local library create copies of the Make it Math toolkits to share with families?

Partner With Your Local School

Schools are an essential part of children learning math. Work with your child's school to make sure that all families know about the importance of doing math at home.

- Ask teachers to include home math games or "I wonder..." questions that complement class lessons.
- Request that your school provide copies of the Make it Math toolkits to all families.
- Know how your school scores on math testing (available at greatschools.org) and ask how they're working to improve those scores.
- Join your local parent organization and advocate for Family Math. Could there be a new position that solely focuses on math?



- Organize a school "Family Math Night" with games, prizes and lots of fun.
- Partner with preschools and Head Start programs to make sure children are playing with numbers, shapes and categories.

Join a Parent Advocacy Group

Parents together make a huge impact. There are local, statewide and national options, such as the [United Parent Leader Action Network](#) (UPLAN).

Tell Your Elected Representatives You Care About Family Math

Policies and systems matter for children and families. It's important that your elected representatives—from your school board to your mayor to national elected officials—know why Family Math is important and why you're committed to it for your child.

- Reach out to your representatives through a call, email, or postcard.
- Invite your local school board to events at school that involve math.

- Send a link to this toolkit to your elected officials along with a note of why this matters to you.
- Vote for candidates who prioritize education and Family Math.

Talking Points About Family Math

When you're talking about Family Math, feel free to speak from your own experience. What has worked for you? What has worked for your child? Sometimes that's hard to do, especially around people you're meeting for the first time or if you're in front of a large group. In those moments, here are a few talking points to get you started:

- [Research](#) shows that entering kindergarten with strong early math skills is a strong predictor of eighth-grade performance regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status.
- Early math skills predict later academic achievement more than reading abilities or social-emotional skills. Children who do well in math are [more likely](#) to receive a high school diploma and attend college.
- Children who can count and recite numbers to 20 in the first half of preschool had the best math scores in first grade.
- Exploring and playing with math early—from infancy onward—helps develop children's cognitive, social and emotional skills.

Circle of Power

You have so much power! You are a leader in your family. You are a leader for your child—in their school, in your community, and in their lives. You make a difference every day.

When we all come together, that's when we've arrived in the circle of power. The circle of power is when many voices join for a common goal.

Do you want a family math night at your local school? Join together with other families and advocate for it. Do you want signs on the bus that encourage math talk with children? Start a petition to send to your local transportation agency. Do you want all children to have fun with math and talk about math with their families? Share this toolkit.

Work with community organizers. Work with parent advocacy groups. It's possible because you're all working towards the same goal: success for our kids.

Spreading the word about Family Math happens one conversation at a time. So go ahead, have that conversation—show your power!

Additional resources

- [Community Organizing and Family Issues \(COFI\)](#): This organization has a proven system to help parents and families become advocates in their communities.





Take the Family Math Pledge!

I, _____ hereby pledge to

PRINT YOUR NAME

Support Family Math and my child by acknowledging:

- I am my child's first teacher.
- Math is key to my child's success in school and in life.
- I can help my child develop brain power with the activities I provide outside of school.
- Every day my children attend school, they have an opportunity to learn.

Do my best to:

- Have fun and talk to my child about math every day.
- Encourage play that uses numbers, quantities or categories.
- Encourage my children to ask questions about things they see: What? Why? How? I wonder...?
- Teach my children to love math by playing games with them.
- Learn what "on time" means at my child's school and help my children develop the habit of on-time attendance.
- Talk to my child's teacher regularly about how we can help at home.
- Talk to other parents in my community about the importance of Family Math.

My child's name: _____

Date _____

Signature: _____