Helping Your Child with Mathematics

Your fourth grader will be assigned Home Connections on a regular basis. Home Connections generally include a game or activity for you and your child to do together, along with a worksheet for your child to complete independently or with some assistance from you if needed. Each Home Connection is based on work students have done in class and includes detailed instructions. In addition to reading the instructions carefully, you can do the following things to help your child be successful with math.

Homework Help
1. If your child has trouble beginning to solve a problem, resist jumping in and explaining how you would do it. Instead, help your child build confidence in his or her own mathematical abilities by prompting him or her with questions like these:
   - What is the problem asking?
   - Have you seen a problem similar to this one before? How did you solve it? Could you use a similar approach to solve this problem?
   - Could a sketch, diagram, or chart help you solve this problem? What kind and how?
   - What is your plan for solving the problem?

2. If you can see that your child has arrived at an incorrect answer, try to help him or her discover his or her own mistake using questions like the ones below. When they retrace their steps or explain their thinking, students will often discover their own mistakes.
   - Can you explain, step-by-step, how you solved the problem?
   - Does this answer make sense to you? Why or why not?
   - Your answer doesn't quite make sense to me. Can you prove that it is correct? How?

3. If your child easily finds the correct answer, you might ask him or her some of the following questions to extend his or her thinking and help improve communication skills. On the other hand, your child may be ready to move on to a more challenging problem.
   - Can you explain how you know this answer is correct?
   - Is there another way to solve this problem?

4. If you become confused when working with your child, try not to get frustrated or upset—confusion and mistakes are an important part of learning! We all feel confused at times when we’re beginning to learn new things. Talk to your child about what you find confusing and try to work together to resolve that confusion. You might be able to clarify the issue yourselves. If not, ask your child to write a note on the homework about what you both found confusing, and encourage him or her to raise the question at an appropriate time during math class.

Math in Your Daily Life
1. We all use math, whether it’s to halve a recipe or estimate what time dinner will be ready based on cooking times. When you find yourself using
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math, talk to your child about it and invite him or her to take part in it. For example, when you're picking up a few items at the grocery store, ask your child to help estimate the total cost of the items in your basket. These kinds of opportunities provide good practice, show that you value math, and demonstrate the ways in which math can be used outside of school.

2. Create fun opportunities to practice math by playing games together. Chess, checkers, card games, and a variety of age-appropriate board games help children develop problem solving strategies, practice basic facts, and consider probability in an informal way.

3. Model a positive attitude toward math. Even if you found mathematics difficult or frustrating when you were in school, try to avoid saying things like “Math is really hard” or “I never got math either.” It’s important for your child to know that like everyone else, he or she can be successful at math!

3. Jigsaw puzzles, blocks, and specialized puzzles like tangrams help students develop their spatial sense and apply geometric principles.

Attitudes about Math

1. Help your child see that math is an interesting topic and one in which we can all be successful. Express interest in what your child is doing in math class, and talk to your child about how he or she solves different math problems.

2. Getting the right answer isn't the only achievement worthy of praise: always praise your child for his or her hard work and improvements.