



Transcription of video: Building Math Skills at Home

[Narrator:] Children with learning disabilities can succeed in math. Parents play a key role in their child's success by partnering with the school and fostering mathematical thinking at home.

[Parent:] Do you have a six?

[Child:] Nope. Go fish.

[Narrator:] In this video, you'll learn how learning disabilities affect math, how to partner with the school to best support your child, and which resources are available to build math skills at home. First and foremost, parents should take the time to understand their child's learning profile, their strengths and their challenges.

[Sue Ball:] So it's important for parents to understand that their children, if they have a learning disability, have average to above-average thinking and reasoning potential. They have potential. They have the ability to think and reason and learn. But along with that potential, there's one or more areas of processing that impacts their ability to show that potential academically, whether it's reading, writing or math. It could impact on number sense, numeration, operations, geometry, algebra, visual spatialization, or word problems, math word problems.

[Narrator:] Adopting a positive attitude and mind set towards math is essential to supporting children in building math skills.

[Janine Franklin:] There's a stigma that has gone with math. And a lot of people, based on the experiences that they've had in the past, have either a positive or a negative growth mind set around what math means, and what it looks like. And we really are trying to break down some of those pieces to help families recognize that the skills that they're learning in math, it's not just about the right answer. It's about the collaboration that occurs, the ongoing problem solving, the ability to empower students to make decisions around what tools are going to help them come to a solution. It's about them being able to reason and prove and strategize. And it's about them being able to connect to things that they've known in the past, and then grow from that.

[Sue Ball:] There's research that's been done by Carol Dweck, looking at the difference between a growth and a fixed mind set for students with a fixed mind set who believe that their ability and their potential is based on specific marks and results. And they don't feel that they



can change or improve or grow from time to time. Whereas a growth mind set, a focus on strategies that are used, and how you've learned makes a significant difference in our own ability to improve how we do. So with a growth mind set, we're supporting our students to recognize that they have potential.

[Narrator:] Some parents may feel they're not equipped to support their child in math, due to their own math anxiety. But with a growth mind set, parents can encourage their child to persevere through challenging math problems, and build math skills applicable to their everyday lives.

[Janine Franklin:] So we recognize that when it comes to mathematics, anxiety is definitely real. Based on some of our families' experiences, we recognize that there are some people who come with mindsets that, you know what, I was not born with the math gene, so it's okay. Mommy can't do this, so it's okay, don't worry about it. And we actually want to break that. Everybody is born with a math brain. We all learn differently, and the strategies that we learn may look different. But when we think about problem solving, we're coming into a workforce where that is one of the key skills that the workforce is saying, you know what, your graduates need to be able to problem solve. They need to be able to come to a challenge and be able to collaborate and work through. We need creativity. We need critical thinking. And in mathematics, those are skills that are built every day within the classroom. So I think one of the first things is, as parents, open up your mind to recognize that, yes, you maybe have had some challenges in the past. But today, and moving forward, math is going to have a new way of speaking.

[Karen Mahoney:] That doesn't mean that we can't talk to kids about problem solving, that we can't introduce them to financial literacy, that when we're out in the park, we can't have conversations. I think sometimes we naturally do that more with literacy as parents, but really, we can use the same type of ideas with math.

[Narrator:] There are several ways parents can support their child in building math skills at home. Teachers are often a great starting point in identifying strategies and resources.

[Megann Roberts:] Learning at home should be engaging. It should be based in real-world, applicable things that you need help with. When you are talking to a child who loves airplanes, you need to talk about the distance, the speed. Use directional words, such as left, right, north, east – because that is a unit in math. It is really important that parents be aware of what's being taught in the classroom at that moment, and try to align the activities they're doing outside of school with that unit. So for example, if a classroom is working on number sense and numeracy, addition and subtraction, there are so many games that can support addition and subtraction,



even one as common as Monopoly. You're going to have to play with the money. You're going to have to add up how much money you have. You can have conversations about easy mental math strategies to add and subtract, while having fun with your family.

[Janine Franklin:] So connect with your homeroom teacher, your child's homeroom teacher. Talk about what sort of activities are happening, what sort of learning progress. How can we support at home? Attend the school council meetings. Come out, because at those times, it's an opportunity to really share about what's happening in the school. What are some of the areas of focus? And specifically with mathematics, what are some of the trends and patterns that we're seeing with our students, and what are some of the things that the school's doing?

[Narrator:] One example of a way parents can engage with their child's school is through family Math Nights, which create a great opportunity to collaborate with teachers and learn about new math resources to try at home.

[Janine Franklin:] A number of schools across the district are exploring what a family Math Night could look like. And by family Math Night, it's an opportunity to bring students and families together to do math, and also giving parents supports of what resources are out there, what online tools are available, what Ministry of Education resources are out there. There's activities based in the division, so primary, junior and intermediate. And students with their families move around and they collect little tokens. There's an opportunity for parents to connect together, and to see math as fun.

[Heather Sears:] Family Math Nights are organized by administrators in schools, so if you're interested, I would encourage you to have a conversation with your child administrator. Say, how can I support having a family Math Night? What can I do to help?

[Narrator:] There are also free online resources children can access at home to support them in math.

[Janine Franklin:] At home, there's a number of great resources that you can access as a family in supporting your child in mathematics. There are a number of online tools, so www.mathies.ca. There's also, for grades seven to ten, it's called Homework Help, where there's an online live math tutor that can support children in their homework.

[Erika Mark:] One of the tools that we've been looking at is called EquatIO. It's produced by a company called TextHelp. It is a web-based program that students access through Google Chrome. And it supports students through handwriting, prediction, speech detect, as well as



providing a math space where teachers can work with students in a collaborative manner on math. And it also allows them to take that math home and review it.

[Narrator:] While finding the right resources to use at home is incredibly helpful, parents' encouraging words can also be empowering for a child with learning disabilities.

[Jordyn Preston:] The first step definitely comes from the parents. Parents have to encourage their kids to raise their hand, pretty much. Parents have to be the ones to say, "It's okay that you don't know. And the only way that you're going to know is if you ask." And the second part of that is for kids to really understand and grasp that idea of, it's okay that I don't know.

[Sharyn Feldman:] There's a fine line for a lot of parents who have a child who has any kind of diagnosis. I think that a lot of parents immediately struggle with, I want to protect them. I want to keep them safe. I don't want them to live with a stigma. You know, I don't want them to be hurt by this. There's also a piece where parents will say the school might expect too much, so they don't -- it comes from a place of fearing failure. They don't want their child to experience this blow all the time, so they want to lessen the load for their child. I think you need to make sure that you expect the best and the most from your child. And I think that parents shouldn't let the diagnosis limit their expectations for their child.

[Narrator:] With the right tools and supports, children with learning disabilities can gain confidence and learn to advocate for themselves.

[Megann Roberts:] If you're a parent whose child has just been diagnosed with a learning disability, don't panic. It's okay. What you can do to support your child at home is pump up their confidence. Talk about what they're great at, and be honest. You know, we've got some areas that we need to work on, but doesn't everybody? And know that different is good. If everybody was the same, we would never have any progress forward.

[Sharyn Feldman:] Middle school to me, as a parent is that period, that transition period, where you really want your child to know that they're going to need to be speaking up for themselves. They're going to need to be paying attention to what's working and what's not working, and that I'm here to support and I'm here to guide and be a mentor. But this is your journey.

[Jordyn Preston:] It was really important that I advocated for myself. I could take those skills that I'd learned in younger grades, and saying if I'm not understanding the basic math, how can I learn it? I care enough to want to succeed that I wasn't just going to stop because it seemed impossible.



[Narrator:] Math offers boundless opportunities and necessary skills for children to lead successful lives. With a growth mind set, the right resources and the collaborative partnership between parents and school, any child can learn and do math.

For more information on how to support your child, visit www.LDatHome.ca.