

Parents urged to build kids' 'maths muscles' to improve results

Much like we are counselled to exercise each day for optimum health, learning experts are urging parents to support their children by instigating 15 minutes of maths each day to improve education levels.

Ratika Khandelwal from Mathnasium, an internationally renowned mathematics learning centre, said there was a dire need to refocus attention on the importance of the subject following Australian students' failure to exceed the OECD average in maths in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

"Focusing on improving skills just a little each day will go a long way to help children foster a respect for the subject and excel at it. But it starts at home.

"Education is ultimately the culmination of parents, school, teachers and students working together to generate better results, but parents can do more. As a parent myself, I know we need to take more responsibility for our role in children's education and helping shape their skills and mindset around learning. Parents need to step up and make maths a normal part of the day.

"It is as simple as getting the kids involved in activities like basic addition or subtraction at the supermarket, halving or doubling a recipe, or estimating how long it takes to get to school, for example. It's all about doing things that make maths fun and helps build their confidence in the subject."

Ms Khandelwal's advice is echoed by Seung Yi, National Maths Coordinator at Australian Christian College, who agreed students should be dedicating time every day to improving their mathematic skills.

"We're definitely not where we should be in mathematics in Australia, and the trend is indicating that we are continuing to fall further behind the rest of the world. It needs to be adequately addressed and fast," he said.

"It's not hard to spend regular time at home developing basic number skills – addition, subtraction, division, multiplication. Just imagine if students worked on basic maths drills every day."

Ms Khandelwal shared her tips to make maths easy at home, based on the Mathnasium method of teaching that uses a unique combination of mental, verbal, visual, tactile, and written techniques to help children learn math.

1. Have kids use cash/coins instead of cards to pay for things. Have them calculate how much a few items will cost and the expected change.
2. Buy analog clocks and have children tell time that way or buy them a watch with an analog clock.
3. Let them help with cooking/baking to learn about measurements and calculations - halve or double a recipe for added practice.
4. Have them measure things in the house using their hands, feet, and a ruler to compare.
5. At Easter have them create a bar chart of the types or names of lollies/eggs they get and how many.
6. At the supermarket have them weigh different produce to get an understanding of weights.

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