



AAMT Position Statement

Advice for parents

The Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers Inc.



"I want to support my child's learning in mathematics. What can I do?"

Some things to remember when tackling this issue

There is no doubt that parents are keen for their children to be confident and successful in mathematics at school. They correctly see mathematics as important for their child's future and are anxious to support their learning. So what can parents do to help their children, particularly if there are concerns about their child's learning?

Some suggestions include:

- Deal with things early — don't keep putting it off.
- Talk to and encourage your child in mathematics. Try to pinpoint the problem areas they may be experiencing difficulty in eg: times tables, fractions, decimals etc.
- Don't say things like *"I was no good at maths so it is little wonder s/he struggles"*. This encourages your child to accept areas of weakness instead of motivating them to work harder on areas they find difficult.
- Once you've had a good talk with your child, approach the teacher. Seek their advice to gain an understanding of the whole picture and then try to get down to the specifics of where the problem areas may be. Ask if it is possible to see some of your child's assessment data/work samples in order to help you understand their problems.
- Don't be too quick to jump to conclusions—take your time to get as full a picture as you can of the issues in your child's learning of maths. Don't always believe everything your child say about their learning and the teaching of maths without discussing it with your child's teacher and the school.
- Develop a plan with the teacher and your child that will ensure your child gets the help they need. Make sure your child takes some responsibility for their own learning within the plan. Set short, medium and long term goals with your child and their teacher. Make these specific and achievable.
- Don't panic if you receive unexpected NAPLAN results. Remember NAPLAN is a picture of your child's performance on one day, under test conditions. It is only one piece of assessment that teachers use to determine your child's mathematics understanding. If you are still concerned, make an appointment to discuss the results with your child's teacher. The teacher will be able to give you the full picture of your child's performance.
- Don't always assume that getting your child some outside help is the only way forward. Consider all options. Seek the teacher's advice on whether getting outside help (tutor, computer package, coaching school etc.) would assist your child.

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- Explore and assess the various tutoring options available. Will they suit your child’s learning needs and learning style? What will be more beneficial—small group or individual, weekly or intensive holiday sessions?
- Take your time to decide. Engaging outside help can be expensive and you want to be sure it is the right choice for your child. Have a trial for a few months and be aware you are not locked into tutoring forever. Your child may only require a term of individual tuition to get them back on track.
- Ensure you, the tutor, the teacher and your child are having regular discussions in order to monitor how your plan is progressing. Agree on specific times to assess the progress of your child with the tutor so as to gain a solid understanding of your child’s progress.
- If you do engage a tutor it is reasonable to ensure that they are not only working with your child towards passing the tests and obtaining good results, but also that they are working with the child towards building their mathematical confidence and capabilities. A win-win combination is when your child starts understanding and enjoying mathematics and starts working independently on mathematical tasks and problems in addition to obtaining good results on assessments.

For further advice go to <http://www.aamt.edu.au/Publications-and-statements/Position-statements/Support-papers>

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