

How to cultivate a love of maths in children

Proficiency in mathematics is a requirement for the majority of demanding tertiary educational programmes including medicine, engineering, computer science and airline pilot training for instance.



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In the past, parents and some teachers may have held the belief that some children have an affinity for maths and others do not. However, research has now shown that the mindset that kids have towards the subject plays a big role in how well they do in it.

In fact, a study of primary school students by Stanford University School of Medicine found that a positive attitude about mathematics significantly enhanced their ability to tackle calculation problems, as their positive mindset enabled the hippocampus (memory centre of the brain) to function better. Additional research has also been done to demonstrate the vital introductory role parents play in their kids' math education.

Mampho Langa, head of schools at Future Nation Schools has compiled a number of ways through which parents and care givers can cultivate a love for maths in their children and build a vital foundation for their future arithmetic skills to be built upon.

- All parents frequently purchase toys for their children and when they do, they should opt for math and STEM inspired educational toys. These toys will not only help to get the kids comfortable with arithmetic, but will also teach them useful skills in a fun way such as counting, learning different shapes, and colours.
- Collect episodes, YouTube videos, and games of their favourite children's programmes that contain math inspired songs, activities and stories such as the count the numbers song with Barney, Mickey's Number Roundup episode, and Vampirina's Learn Math with Vee game.
- If they or you have a smart mobile device such as an iPad, you can employ educational apps such as Microsoft Math and Minecraft: Education Edition to advance and boost their mathematical skillset. These feature fun math activities as well as kids' games that helps foster an affinity for mathematics in kids while enabling them to get to grips with concepts such as number counting, addition, subtraction, writing out numbers, the sequence of numbers etc. These apps have also been gamified, meaning that they also help foster a sense of competition and achievement within the children, since they can earn badges for completing tasks and move up in the rankings, if the app is used by the whole class for example.

- Playing old school card games such as Uno or Maths 24 as a family will also help advance their counting and arithmetic skills.

Using these ideas to help foster a love for maths and build the foundation of their future mathematics skills as early as possible, will lead to greater academic success and ultimately, the opportunity to study a greater range of subject matter down the line.

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