

Advice From Colleagues: Working With Parents

What can I do for parents to support them working with their children on homework?

- Make sure parents know about the Everyday Mathematics webpage for homework help for their grade level. (You can find the page for your grade level by going to the “Parents” tab and to the appropriate grade level for Home Link or Study Link help.)
- Copy sections of the lesson instructions with explicit directions and steps for how to do problems and send these home with homework. Another resource is the reference book for your grade level. If you don’t send the books home, you might want to copy the relevant information page on the back of the homework.
- Suggest that families play the online games. (Your school must have a subscription. Families need a login and password from the school.)
- Make up a packet for families with tools like a number grid, fact triangles, paper dominoes.
- Send home the unit Family Letters. Always read them before sending them to be sure they will make sense to your students’ parents/ families. We add our own thoughts to our class letters as needed.
- If your district doesn’t have an online guides for family members, several districts do. If you Google Everyday Mathematics parents, it is pretty easy to find online resources.
- Include a worked example with the homework so family members can figure out what to do if their child is confused.
- I always created a Homework Folder that was a regular pocket folder. It could hold the fact triangles or Home Link (Study Link) paper and had a place for parents to write notes to me if they had specific questions.
- I provide a feedback form on the back of the homework so I can tell how students are doing and if they are having specific problems.
- I send homework home as a unit, because 1) it saves paper, 2) students are able to go a lesson ahead if they know that they will be too busy the following night.

What can we do at our school to support students who do not have someone to help with homework?

- I have about 25 minutes in the morning when a student who does not have help at home can sit with me to do the homework.



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- Allow time for them to complete it in class during recess, activities, or early morning.
- In our town, high school students meet children at the library to help them.
- We used a Mentor program to support our students who did not have help from home. Teachers could identify students who needed this assistance and we matched students to Mentors who were volunteers (many times, Grandparents). We have also created a morning “study hall” that monitored by classroom teachers who volunteer their morning time once a week.
- Partner kids in the morning with other children while they are settling in. Have parent volunteers come in to work with students.
- We have a homework club as part of our after school program and we strongly encourage students to join. We also don’t count homework against the students if they don’t do it. (We don’t tell them this though.)
- Make sure to read the directions to them and ask for questions before they take home their assignments.

How can I support parents in understanding a variety of computation algorithms?

- Host a parent night and assign small groups of parents an algorithm from the appropriate Student Reference Book or My Reference Book. The parents should become “experts” on the assigned algorithm (with some help from the teacher). The small groups can then teach the larger group the strategies.
- I placed links to the algorithm videos on my web page. (These can be found in the algorithms section of the EM website.) Also, I teach the algorithms to my parents at Open House. You could plan to teach parents the most important algorithms at parent conferences.
- Send a packet home with each student that explains each algorithm. Good resources for algorithm explanations are the student reference books or the Operations Handbook that you can get from the publisher.

What are some ideas for informing parents or possible topics/ activities for a Family Math Night?

- Check the Home Connection Handbook for some ideas about running Family Math Nights.
- 1. Talk about program. 2. Describe objectives. 3. Demonstrate actual lesson. 4. Discuss expectations of teachers for students. 5. Demo homework.



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- We rotated among 5 first grade classrooms for 1 hour. Each classroom had a math game available with directions. The students know how to play so they just got right to it. We really were not needed! [You might also include some of the problem types at stations—for example, What’s My Rule? or Frames-and-Arrows Diagrams or name-collection boxes.
- We made a PowerPoint presentation of information about Everyday Math and inserted pictures of students at different grade levels doing math. This played in a corner of our cafeteria throughout our Family Game Night. Parents and children were able to play EM games at tables. We displayed books about math and games that use math that can be bought in stores.
- Have 1-3 games for each grade level. Families can go around and make and take things home. Have stations so parents are moving. Or distribute the games throughout classrooms that parents can visit. Have the children come so they can play the games together. Have estimation jars throughout the school with prizes for families to win. The prizes can be mathematics materials for doing EM activities.
- Last year our theme was “Math Fair.” It was for an hour in the evening. Teachers or grade levels had booths with a variety of games - most of them coming from EM. Some booths had prizes. We also had our computer lab open for students to use EM Games Online, for which we have a subscription. As people entered the building each person added a part to a horizontal bar graph showing grade levels. This helped us keep attendance. We had door prizes too. Oh, and cookies and juice. People made their way through the different areas at their own pace. There was no agenda. This year our theme was “Bee all you can bee at Math Night!” Every station had a title with “Bee” in it. We had “Bee a measurer,” “Bee an estimator,” “Bee a player,” etc. I think the thing that makes our night so successful is most teachers come to the event and the students love to see their teachers in this new environment. Next year we’re thinking of doing “How do you measure up?” It should be fun!
- Walk the parents through a model lesson for the first night. Provide a game night for another night. Show them that Everyday Mathematics is fun and that students do learn.
- I had my parents help me organize and fill my Tool Kits. They spent about thirty minutes labeling specific components of the kit with the student numbers (1001, 1002, etc.) and then we passed the tool kit boxes around the room and each parent loaded in the tool they had labeled. Then, we spent the remaining 30 minutes playing highlighted games from our grade level.
- Post a display board of student work samples from a specific strand of mathematics as a good way to keep parents informed about EM. Put the bulletin board in a place near the front office and have different grade levels be responsible for collecting and displaying the information. Change it each month.



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What can I provide for parents or students that will support continuing exploration of mathematics concepts or practice of mathematics skills over the summer?

- When travelling or visiting museums, parents can ask children mathematical questions related to their travels.
- Send home games and a math packet with practice problems.
- Allow parents to check out the reference books and a packet of materials so that parents can play math games that students learned during the year.
- Last summer we had our EM Online subscription over the summer (for online games and the reference books).
- I typically send home a list of those unit goals still needing work in order to become proficient or stay proficient for my students to work on over the summer.
- Direct parents to website that provide worthwhile activity suggestions and resources.

