

How can I help my child with maths?

By Madeleine White

Maths teaching has changed. Once upon a time it was enough that parents understood multiplication, fractions and percentages. Not that we necessarily understood how it all worked – simply that it did. These days, parents are confronted with an ever-growing list of numeracy vocabulary. Not so bad when explained by a teacher at parents' evening; it goes without saying that I want my six-year-old to understand why she does things. However, when I tried to explain the how to her in my pre-'99-numeracy-strategy-way a couple of days later, Erin started crying: that is when I realised I had to find a way into her numeracy world.

A whole industry of teaching in cyberspace is emerging, driven by struggling kids and frantic parents, all trying to manage the work-loads of a modern maths curriculum and get a handle on terms such as chunking and gridding. Deliverability of a scalable, consistently excellent numeracy teaching solution is something many schools aim to deliver. Official attention is also being drawn to something teachers have known all along: schools that successfully engage parents in learning are the ones that are most able to deliver excellence consistently, because there has been a joint commitment made to improving learning outcomes.

Companies such as online tutoring specialists Whizz Education recognised the importance of this from the outset. This has meant that Maths-Whizz, with its award-winning numeracy tutoring content, has created a learning system that is able to be reactive as well as truly responsive. This is because it engages students, parents and teachers in a Triangle of Success. A key tool for this is the fact that Maths-Whizz sets maths age as the baseline of attainment. Maths age is a measure of a child's numeracy based on targets that complement the national curriculum.

Back to my six-year-old. I decided that no more would I be asking my 14-year-old son for advice as to how to help Erin do her place value homework. I came across Maths-Whizz when I Googled place value and realised that instead of being particularly complicated it was actually designed to help her learn the value of numbers and where they fitted (for example in 1,220, the place value of the number one is thousands). Even before I signed Erin up on a paid subscription, Maths-Whizz allowed me to understand why she was being taught the way she was. To be



honest we haven't looked back and her Maths Age has gone up from 7.2 to nearly eight since mid August.

More recently, she has also been working on multiplication. Instead of showing her the way I had been taught and confusing her, I was able to preview the exercise she was about to do and so participate in her learning. This preview helped me to understand the 'grid method' (based on the idea of splitting the two or more numbers being multiplied, into their tens and units and adding them). Erin's school doesn't use Maths-Whizz but I am proud of her achievements and share them with the school; and because Erin is proud of her maths she is able to share it with me. **PS**

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The following statistics are based on an online survey from January this year run by Maths-Whizz based on 1016 respondents – aged five to 13:

Motivation

- 87% of children want to be good at Maths and nearly half of all respondents (47.5%) said that getting better at Maths was a motivation in itself.
- Just 18% said they wanted to improve to please their parents
- Nearly 80% of students preferred an online teaching environment
- Nearly 70% said that experience with the Maths Whizz online tutor had improved their attitudes to Maths

Kids start to dislike Maths at age 9
In the graph below the shift is clear. Younger

children broadly either love or like maths, older children have a more nuanced view, and positive opinions of maths plunge at age 12.

Key point: Children are self-motivated.

However, as they get older their confidence dips, which can lead to very negative attitudes towards Maths at the upper age range. The turning point for this, as demonstrated by the graph below, is at the age of nine.

