Math in Focus™: Theory and Practice

Volume 6

Welcome to (or back to!) the *Math in Focus* newsletter, ***Math in Focus: In Theory and In Practice***.

We applaud your decision to use *Math in Focus* and its instructional strategies to further teacher effectiveness, student learning, and greater success in mathematics moving forward.

Each newsletter will lend some support to help you move forward successfully. These tips may be information that we share during professional development, may be something that has worked for us on a personal level and/or may be suggestions from another *Math in Focus* user like you!

Our intent is to provide some insight to what will make *Math in Focus* more meaningful for your teachers and students. We take the position of exploring a topic in a theoretical sense and then what it may look like as you implement the ideas into your teaching over the course of the school year.

Parental/Guardian Support: In Theory

Garnering support for a new mathematics program is essential. Having parents support the curriculum and its beliefs, ideas, and structures is critical for classroom success and the success of their child (children).

With the parents and community on board with the recent math adoption, the change it brings, and the adjustments that everyone will make, your school will have a much smoother implementation in the coming year.

Parental/Guardian Support: In Practice

There are several ways that we've found helpful in informing parents about the adoption of *Math in Focus* and its instructional practices. Each, by itself, is helpful, but when all of them (or as many as can be) are implemented, you will see a real community of believers develop.

A letter from the teacher: A personal letter from the child's teacher is a great way to begin the school year. The letter should include information about the new adoption with an explanation of the new standards and expectations. It can include some research/background about Singapore's success and should have a short explanation of the new pedagogy, how that might look during the math lesson and potential differences in work coming home. Emphasize with parents that any work that comes home is meant to be done independently. Ask parents to send a short note back to school if the student struggles through it, instead of offering to help in the way that they were taught in school. Engaging their child in conversation about what went on in class can be helpful to parents as they encourage their child to work hard on the task that he/she should understand: Did you use manipulatives in class today? Did you draw any pictures or visual models to help in understanding? Did you work with a partner on a Game, Hands-On activity or Let's Explore? Were you able to complete the Let's Practice today—what did it ask you to do?

Send home the School-to-Home Connections Newsletter from *Math in Focus*: Each chapter provides the objectives covered, vocabulary that is to be developed, and an activity to foster understanding. Encourage parents to use the vocabulary and ask their child to use it, too, when describing mathematical situations and situations from everyday life. The activity can be done multiple times and can be varied to promote mathematical thinking. Ask students to share any ways that they have used the activity or changed it.

Reteach pages as homework: If the Reteach pages have not been used in class (or even if there are just a few that were not used), send them home as part of the week's homework. They offer an excellent opportunity for parents to see how the content is broken down into its simplest form and allow the children to explain it to their parents. Again, make sure that anything that is sent home can be completed by the student independently.

Think Central access: Set up accounts for your students/parents on Think Central so that they can log in to see the student textbook, virtual manipulatives, student interactivities (if your school/district purchased them) and math background videos. Being able to access these tools helps to build understanding and allows students some familiar tools to use at home. It is not recommended (although there could be some advantages) to allow access to the Workbook. This resource is the final piece in the 2- or 3-day lesson that provides some of the only proof that the student understands the concepts being taught at grade level. If they are allowed previous access, it may not be a true measure of independent understanding.

Parent University: Having a Parent University (or several) delivered by a *Math in Focus* trainer or by the administrators/teachers at the school is one of the best ways to showcase the new curriculum and its expectations. During this evening, the research and pedagogy are shared, examples of instructional techniques are defined, and parents can be given a chance to try out some of the tasks that their child is doing at school. The evening can be more informational with practice to come later OR tables with manipulatives can be set up and parents and children can do problems together. What a great evening of information and fun!

We hope some of these suggestions were helpful and have given you some ideas to start the school year in a positive way!

Our intent is to continue this newsletter throughout the 2013-2014 school year. We'd like your feedback and will add your suggestions to a future newsletter if you'd like!

Have a great school year!
The *Math in Focus* Specialist Team

If you would like to contribute or unsubscribe to this email, please respond to kelly.snyder@hmhco.com