



# MATH MINUTE FOR PARENTS

TEAM-MATH PARENT UPDATES — VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

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## TEAM-Math + Parents = Improved Mathematics

The TEAM-Math project is working to improve mathematics education across east Alabama through providing professional development to teachers, developing teacher leaders, creating curriculum guides and instructional materials, and improving the preparation of new teachers of mathematics. However, there is another important part to the equation of improving mathematics in our schools — parents!

### Parent Briefing

TEAM-Math is involving parents in the mathematics education of their children. Last year, TEAM-Math held a briefing in November for parent leaders, including representatives of PTAs/PTOs from the 12 TEAM-Math school districts. TEAM-Math is working on another briefing for parents to be held this November. More than 70 parents and school representatives attended last year. They learned about TEAM-Math and experienced for themselves this teaching approach as they created fractions using geoboards,

which are bright yellow squares with an array of pegs. A video of fourth and fifth grade students solving the same problem further enlightened parents about the power of actively engaging students!

Another highlight of the briefing was a teacher's perspective of the program, offered by Michele Matin, an eighth-grade teacher from Opelika Middle School. She said, "Before [TEAM-Math], I did all the talking. Now, my students work together in groups and present their results to the class. They are much more engaged in their own learning." The session concluded with some tips for helping parents work with their children. (See below.)

### Multicultural Literature

Another avenue for involving parents is a Multicultural Literature program, in which parents and students explore mathematics together through reading children's literature and working on related mathematics problems.

An example of a typical session

follows. *The Rajah's Rice* (Barry, 1994) is a particularly well-received piece of literature. This Indian folktale focuses on a clever girl named Chandra who loved elephants and numbers. She was the Rajah's elephant bather and when the elephants became sick, she was able to cure them. The Rajah gave her the reward of her choice for curing the elephants. Her choice was the amount of rice it would take if the Rajah placed two grains of rice on the first square of his chessboard, four grains on the second square, eight on the next, and so on, doubling each pile of rice until the last square was reached.

If the Rajah would have been able to complete the task, he would have needed enough rice to fill Mt Kilimanjaro. This story helps parents and children to see the power of mathematical thinking and exponential growth.

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### How Can You Help Make the Goals of TEAM-Math a Reality for Your Child?

1. Set high standards for your child in math.
2. Point out that many jobs require math.
3. Help your child see that math is very much a part of everyday life.
4. Stimulate your child's interest in technology.
5. Play games that help your child develop decision making and mental math skills.
6. Be positive about math and encourage your child to do his/her best.
7. Participate in school events like Family Math Nights so that you will be aware of things that you can do at home to reinforce what your child is learning in school.

Multi-link cubes are used to simulate the doubling of the rice during the reading of the story, so that the younger children can understand what is happening. Following the reading and discussion of the story, parents and their children are given additional problems to solve. All of the problems are related to finding patterns. Some of the questions are answered as a group to get the families started, and then families work the other problems on their own. As families work on the problems facilitators circulate among the families, monitoring their progress and providing hints as needed.

When the families complete these problems, the group reassembles, and the families present their solutions. As they present their solutions, the facilitator asks questions about how

they solved the problems. Further, children enjoy working with their parents in this setting and over time seem to display more confidence and a willingness to engage in problem solving activities. This program is being implemented at a number of schools throughout east Alabama and has been very well-received. One parent stated that

her child “seems to be a bit more enthusiastic in math,” and another parent stated that he “refreshed his brain.”

If you and your child would like to take part in the multicultural literature workshops, contact your child’s school to see if they are participating. We hope to see you there!



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can find out much more about TEAM-Math on our website — [www.TEAM-Math.net](http://www.TEAM-Math.net). If you have additional questions, contact us at:

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## HELPING YOUR CHILD: RESOURCES ON THE WEB

[www.FigureThis.org](http://www.FigureThis.org) is a collection of math activities parents can do with their children.

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