



Who Knew?, New News!



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December Newsletter

What Can Baseball Batting, a Terrific Dad, and a Bucket Teach Us About Reading?

This article was written by Miscese Gagen, a mother with a passion for teaching children to read proficiently by using effective methods.

A few years ago my son was playing on the local little league team. He loved baseball and was a good athlete, energetic and enthusiastic. He could throw, catch, and play any position. He was even a top pitcher on the team. However, he was having difficulties hitting the ball. No matter how hard he tried or how solid he swung the bat he somehow missed the ball. He was repeatedly striking out. Needless to say he was discouraged and beginning to think he was a 'poor hitter'.

Fortunately, that is not the end of the story. My son is blessed to have a terrific dad who also happened to know about baseball skills. His dad watched him strike out and noticed when he went to swing the bat he was stepping back with his foot causing his shoulder to drop and the bat to swing under the ball. His Dad saw that he was making errors in an important fundamental element of the correct baseball bat swing. He needed to develop a proficient level swing.

So that afternoon, he took our son out and did some direct instruction on his swing. He simply put an old plastic bucket behind our son's foot and then started pitching to him. When our son incorrectly stepped back with his foot, he knocked the bucket over. This simple backyard 'bucket trick' taught him to swing without stepping back. Repeated practice of swinging at the ball without stepping back developed 'proficient' batting technique. And guess what? The very next game our son made several solid hits. He was a good hitter the rest of the season.

The point of this story has nothing to do with baseball. The important lessons are:

- Children with lots of ability and potential can still fail if they are missing essential skills.
- When a child is struggling you can help them achieve success by intervening with direct instruction targeted to build the essential skills! Determine what the student is doing incorrectly. For my son's baseball batting it was stepping back. For reading, it is often incorrect processing of print. Once you identify the problem, you can then target instruction to specifically develop essential skills. For my son's batting an old bucket did the trick. For reading problems, effective direct systematic phonics programs can develop proficient reader phonologic processing of print.



Citizenship Assembly

There will be no citizenship assembly this month. The students will be working on respect for the months of December and January. Third grade will be presenting at the assembly in January.

Top 10 Strategies to Improve Your Math Grades

By: Jason Gibson

Taken from *mathgoodies.com*

1) If you don't understand something, focus on mastering that topic before moving on to the next topic. It sounds simple, but it is absolutely essential. Let's say a student is learning Algebra, and he or she is having a hard time understanding how to add and subtract negative and positive numbers. All of us struggle with this in the beginning as it is a sticky point for most students. Some students in this situation, out of frustration say they "can't" learn this topic, will move on to the next lesson in the hope that they will be able to understand that one.

This is a recipe for disaster.

Math is very much like learning to read. If you don't know your letter sounds then you have no hope of being able to sound out words and there is no way possible that you could read a book. All math courses are taught in a specific sequence because the every topic builds on the previous topic. If you are having a problem with a topic, continue working with that one until you understand it and can work problems successfully.

2) Work example problems and check your answers to gain practice with every lesson. Always begin with the easiest problem in your book, even if you think it will be too "easy" to solve. It is very very important to build your confidence. Gradually work harder and harder problems from your book and check your answer for each one. After working a dozen or more problems from the section (two dozen is best), you are ready to move on to the next section. Many students want to plow through a lesson just to make it to the next one. You cannot just read a section in a Math book and become an expert on that section. You must work problems. If you can't work problems then you are not ready to move on. The good news is that working problems will build your confidence, and confidence is 100% the name of the game in math.

3) When beginning to work a Math problem, do not "map out a path from problem-to-answer" in your head before writing anything down. I see this almost every day. It is very common when someone looks at a Math problem that they try to "figure it out" in their head before writing anything down. Students are tempted to do this most often with Word Problems. Since a word problem is written in sentence form, it is common to think that you can "think your way to the answer".

What you need to do is begin by first writing down the problem. Then you begin to solve it one step at a time. Write down even the simple things.

4) When you study and do homework, try to find a quiet place to do it. I used to listen to music all of the time while trying to do homework. Over time I realized that if I had a quiet place without the background noise, I could focus much better. Try to find a quiet spot in your home or in the Library to get your schoolwork done and you will get your work done much more quickly because you'll be able to focus and absorb more.

5) If someone asks you for help, try to explain the topic to them as best you can. This one is going to seem a little odd for this list...but there is one universal truth. Those who can teach others have a true grasp of the material. The process of rephrasing information back to someone else and breaking things down into bite sized chunks will increase your own understanding. It will help you understand at a fundamental level what the stumbling blocks are for the topic, which will help you as you move on in your math studies.

6) Never, ever work math problems in pen. This one is pretty simple. You will make a mistake; it is only a matter of time. When you do, you will want to completely erase your mistake and write over it. You want clean-neat paper with a clean well thought-out solution.

7) Try to use a mechanical pencil with separate eraser, if you can. Mechanical pencils have cleaner lines and the separate eraser allows you to erase more cleanly.

8) Keep your solutions neat and line-by-line. Always work problems vertically, with one step on every line. Never work horizontally. It may take more paper, but you will be able to follow your steps much more easily. The steps you write down tell the teacher what you are thinking and how you are attacking the problem.

9) Don't work problems very late at night. I have worked problems at night and got the wrong answer, and I knew I must have a silly mistake in the solution. I would usually set out to find it, but many times when you are tired you simply can't find the silly mistake. The next morning after about 5 minutes I could spot the simple sign error or even a simple multiplication error that caused the problem.

10) If the problem lends itself to it, draw a picture of the problem. Please do yourself a favor and draw a picture of what the problem is describing, even if your picture is simple. We are visual beings...the process of drawing the situation causes us to internalize what the problem is really asking for. It helps figure out how to proceed.

Remember, there is no silver bullet in learning Math. It comes with taking things one step at a time and with practice. The tips above will help you along in your math studies, and give you confidence. And confidence is 100% the name of the game in learning any level of Math.

Citizenship Assembly Character Traits

December and January—Respect, 3rd Grade

February—Caring, Kindergarten

March—Honesty, 4th Grade

April—All Traits, 6th Grade

Labels Information

Every time a class turns in a thousand labels they earn a free recess. At the end of the year, the class that has turned in the most labels will receive a prize. Here are the results as of November 18:

Kindergarten—758

1st Grade—1,001

2nd Grade—704

3rd Grade—679

4th Grade—1709

5th Grade—293

6th Grade—245

Upcoming Events

December 15—Elementary and High School Christmas Concert at 6 p.m.

December 17—Reading Fun Day trip to Perry Park Center

December 18—Dismiss at 12:15

December 21-January 1—No School, Christmas Break

Reminders to Parents

- All lunch money is due at the beginning of the week.
- If lunches exceed the \$10 limit, an alternate lunch will be served.

Cold Weather

Please send coats, hats, gloves, and scarves with your child every day to school. Your child will be playing outside unless the wind chill factor is 24 degrees or below.



