

A “New” Approach to Learning Math

Math was not my best subject. I worked hard. Yet my best efforts brought meager results. Math stumped me and I stumped my teachers.

I had always thought, and felt, that I was math “dumb.”

Then some years ago a physicist colleague suggested something astounding. She said maybe I could have understood math if my teachers had tried a different approach.

If, like me, you think you were born with math defect syndrome (MDS) *, then you may have benefitted from the recent PTA meeting at Sand Hill. Principal Mallory Blankenship and her diagnostic team of dedicated teachers have found a cure!

The cure is aptly named “Great Minds--Eureka Math.” Archimedes, an Ancient Greek mathematician, physicist, engineer, inventor and astronomer, was once asked by King Hiero II to discover if his new crown was constructed of pure gold or a silver substitute. As history reveals, Archimedes took a bath – purportedly to stimulate his thinking. In other words, he did not just think with his brain!

Imagine yourself at an earlier age in a math class taught through full body immersion! That is the EUREKA experienced by Principal Blankenship and her team of forensic-pedagogic-archaeologists teachers.

The root of the word EUREKA means “to find or discover.” “EU” means good. In plain English this means that the children at Sand Hill are going to have a GOOD TIME LEARNING MATH and (unlike you and me) will become confident, fearless MATH PROBLEM SOLVERS!

How does Eureka Math work?

Kids use their fingers for counting 1—10. For learning addition kids stand up. Likewise, for learning subtraction, they squat.

For counting numbers above the capacity of our 10 fingers, kids pair up and combine their clenched fists to practice the teens. Performing addition and subtraction requires not only mental quickness but also eye-hand coordination, especially when practicing problems like 16-9.

Now just extend this principle to a hundred! If you dropped by your child's math class you might mistake it for a PE class. There is, of course, more to it than this, but as your child advances never does the more become less motivating. And being intimidated by the challenge of learning Math just may be a thing of the past.

At Sand Hill our kids are learning that rigorous math starts with vigorous math. Just watch these kids do a lesson and experience your own Eureka (or heart attack).

For more details about Eureka Math, visit the home page for Sand Hill Elementary and click on "Math Resources for Parents, then "GreatMinds.net."

John Campbell, NMSD Director, District 4
jcampbell@northmasonschoools.org