



Rhino Roar

News for the Washington community

Published weekly

September 10, 2020

Links to [calendar](#) and past [newsletters](#) on [PTA website](#)

Back to School Night is TONIGHT at 6:30 pm!

We'll kick the evening off with a brief whole school zoom meeting that will include an overview from Principal Hazen and important information from your PTA.

<https://berkeley-net.zoom.us/>

Meeting ID: 833 0419 7219 Passcode: 360868

One tap mobile +16699006833,,83304197219#,,,,

Your child's teacher will then host two identical classroom sessions from 7 - 7:30 pm and from 7:30 - 8 pm to go over what will be taught this year and how you can best support your child's learning. Watch for this meeting information from your child's teacher.

If your child is absent for any reason, please

email washingtonattendance@berkeley and copy your child's teacher. Thank you!

Kindergarten home learning kit pickup is scheduled for Monday, September 14, from 2 - 5:30 pm. If you aren't able to come at that time, or you need delivery, please email Principal Hazen katiahazen@berkeley.net

Want to get involved this year? Your Washington School Site Committee (SSC) needs new members! You can nominate yourself to serve on SSC by filling out [this form](#), deadline tomorrow

If you use the school lunches provided by BUSD, fill out the meal applications on ezmealapp.com.

We encourage all parents/guardians to join Illuminate Home Connect this school year! This is the portal for parents/guardians to view grades, assignments and attendance data. See [here](#) for how to access.

From the BUSD Sustainability team: Outdoor Learning

Berkeley Unified School District is exploring options for welcoming students back to campus utilizing our outdoor facilities. Jezra Thompson, Supervisor of the Gardening and Cooking Program, Stephen Collins, Facilities Maintenance Manager, and Sofia Peltz, the Sustainability Coordinator, are partnering with community groups and some foremost experts in the field.

[We are actively](#) participating in working groups hosted by the [National COVID-19](#)

[outdoor learning initiative](#). Many of the leaders and experts are BUSD parents.

In order to communicate more consistently about these efforts to the community, we will be posting updates on the BUSD Sustainability Plan page, found [here](#). The next steps include assessing outdoor learning environments within our unique school sites to decide the feasibility of outdoor learning. There may be opportunities for community input, we will keep you posted.

Feel free to reach out to our Sustainability Coordinator, Sofia Peltz: sustainability@berkeley.net, who will be coordinating these efforts. Thank you for your partnership and your immense efforts in this work!

Staff Spotlight: Introducing our new Garden Instructor, Keturah Kornbluth:

“Since we can’t be in the garden together, I try to bring the garden to students with books, songs, dancing and live plant and animal viewings!

I LOVE LOVE LOVE plants and animals! One might say I am obsessed!

I live in the Berkeley hills - my kids are in Kinder and 2nd at Jefferson Elementary. I also teach garden at John Muir Elementary.

Questions for me? Email keturahkornbluth@berkeley.net

[Math Anxiety Is Real. Here's How To Help Your Child Avoid It](#) from kqed.org

Does math make you a little nervous? You're in the majority.

The phrase "number anxiety" was first coined by researchers [back in the 1950s](#).

By some estimates, as high as [93 percent](#) of Americans feel some degree of math anxiety. In 2012, about 30 percent of high school students [reported that they felt "helpless"](#) when doing mathematics problems.

For many people, math fears can be traced back to elementary school, and specifically, to timed tests and forced memorization, says Stanford University professor Jo Boaler. "Neuroscientists have shown recently that for people with math anxiety, a fear center lights up in their brain — the same as when they see snakes and spiders — and the problem-solving center of the brain shuts down," Boaler says.

But what can we do as parents to improve our kids' attitudes towards math?

We sat down with Rosemarie Truglio, the senior vice president of curriculum and content at Sesame Workshop, to learn.

She says, "math is everywhere." It's embedded in everything we do. So with a little awareness, she says, by sharing everyday activities, playing and interacting with your child, you can familiarize them with math concepts without undue pressure.

But there are nuances to doing this well. First off:

1. Don't let your own math anxiety hold your kids back.

Math anxiety is a real phenomenon all over the world. But it's not equal opportunity. It's tied to stereotypes — to race, and especially to gender. Research shows that mothers are [prone to pass that feeling on to their kids](#), especially to girls.

That means, says Truglio, "we have to check ourselves when we're talking about math." Boaler and Truglio agree that we must never tell our kids "I'm bad at math," "I don't like math," or "I didn't do well in math at your age."

"When kids get that message, their math achievement goes down immediately," Boaler says. "And that's shown in particular with mothers and daughters."

She adds: "You might have to fake it sometimes."

2. Talk about math when you're sharing everyday activities.

Sudha Swaminathan is an early childhood education professor at Eastern Connecticut State University. She says children who are successful in math have parents who point out math even in the most ordinary moments. For example, she says, "You ask them to put their books away. It doesn't fit? Why doesn't it fit? Maybe the book is too tall? Too big?"

Not only are you introducing the concept of measurements, Swaminathan says, but you're also introducing a math process: problem solving.

Similarly, Truglio suggests, you can sing a song together, faster and then slower. "These are relational concepts — math words related to rhythm." Or try setting the table: Have them guess the right number of forks and then check.

Boaler's tip is to look out for visual patterns. "Get kids to look and think — we can see patterns in fence posts, in flowers."

As children get older, the possibilities expand. Calendars, timers, money, maps, drawing, measuring, crafts...these are all chances to talk math.

3. Play math — with board games, card games, puzzles, and more.

"Research has shown that when parents just play, they're actually really, really good at pulling out these deep concepts from children — much better than even teachers," Swaminathan says.

Blocks, puzzles, card games and even video games all have some research support. And board games are particular stars in this area. Research has shown that the more kids play any game with dice and numbered squares — [like Chutes and Ladders](#) — the better their basic math skills get.

4. Go beyond right and wrong answers.

"One thing I would tell parents not to do is to become the teacher in the house," says Swaminathan.

Avoid constantly quizzing your children, she says, or marching them through their homework, and for heaven's sake, put away the flashcards. "When we play with our friends we're not constantly asking them: 'What's this shape?'" Instead, she says, ask real, open-ended questions.

Say you and your child are sitting at a round table. You could ask, "What's the shape of this table?" But, you already know the answer, and your kids know that you know. Two better questions, Swaminathan suggests: "Why did you choose the circle for our table?" or "How do you know this table is round?"

These are good questions for several reasons. First, they are authentic. Parents, says Swaminathan, are naturally interested in both what their children know and how they think. Open-ended questions can start real conversations that bring you and your children closer together.

Second, they prompt children to describe their thinking out loud. This gets them thinking about their own thinking process, a key skill known as "metacognition." It gets them discussing and reflecting on the properties of shapes, for example. "It's going to make them look at that circle one more time and to say; this feels curvy and the other one feels sharp on the edge."

The third reason that open-ended questions are a good idea? They don't have right or wrong answers.

The reason this is important gets back to the roots of math anxiety. As Boaler

describes it, many students can get turned off by math instruction that focuses on high-pressure memorization of facts and formulas. They find it stressful, "shallow" or both. She recommends instilling a love of math along with a growth mindset; in other words, the insight that it's possible to improve one's skills by effort and experience.

But whether your kids are in preschool stacking blocks or in high school struggling with calculus, home should be a safe place where there's "no fear in making a mistake," says Truglio. "That's basically how children learn."

If you want to drive this lesson home, Swaminathan says you can deliberately make a mistake and give your child a chance to correct you.

In a bigger sense, for parents with math anxiety, raising kids provides a chance for a do-over. You can try experiencing the world through their eyes: a world that's made of math and full of wonder.

Thanks to Sudha Swaminathan, Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, Julia DeLapp, and the whole team at the Center for Early Childhood Education. Thanks are due also to the math learning researchers [Jo Boaler](#), Manuela Paechter, Ann Dowker, Rosemarie Truglio, Ken Scarborough and all our friends at Sesame Workshop.

This episode originally ran in May 2019. You can listen to the [episode audio here](#)

Questions or concerns? Please email Principal Katia Hazen at katiahazen@berkeley.net